

Is social media doing social harm?

New

Internationalist

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NI 487 November 2015
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refugees

Broken dreams in
the Western Sahara

Patricio Guzmán's
search for the truth

Paris climate summit

Heroes, villains and why there is still hope



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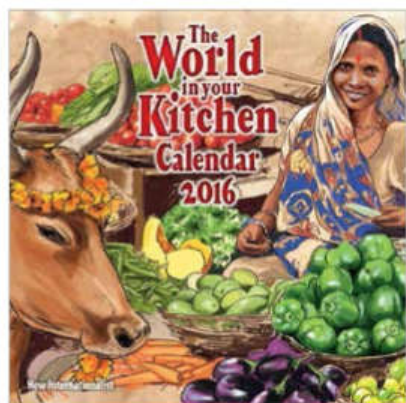
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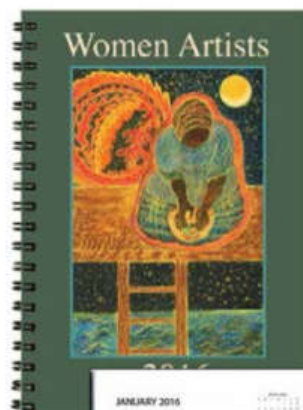
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THE NEW INTERNATIONALIST workers' co-operative exists to report on the issues of world poverty and inequality; to focus attention on the unjust relationship between the powerful and powerless worldwide; to debate and campaign for the radical changes necessary to meet the basic needs of all; and to bring to life the people, the ideas and the action in the fight for global justice.

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Paris climate talks



When we agreed to guest-edit a magazine on the upcoming

Paris climate talks, we felt some trepidation. We'd been at the Copenhagen summit in 2009 – one of us inside the conference centre, the other outside with the protesters – and the bad memories still felt fresh. Grassroots, frontline and Indigenous campaigners thrown out of the talks. Thousands of activists locked in cages by the Danish police. A final stitch-up non-deal from a handful of polluting governments, and the overinflated hopes of millions of people brought crashing down. Was it all about to happen again?

But in the course of putting together this magazine, we have spoken to climate-justice activists from all over the world. Much to our surprise, we're now feeling unexpectedly hopeful. There's plenty to play for in Paris, and while there are no easy victories to be grabbed, the global climate movement could be about to take a big leap forward.

The story of Paris has only just begun. We'd love to see it through to the end, and bring you voices and perspectives from the talks that the mainstream media will ignore. That's why we're launching a crowdfunding appeal to allow us to report from the frontlines in Paris. We're excited at the prospect of taking New Internationalist into the thick of the action – but we need support from you, our readers, to make it happen. See below for how to donate, and we hope you'll join us – virtually at least – on the Paris climate rollercoaster... ■

Jess Worth

Danny Chivers

JESS WORTH and DANNY CHIVERS
for the New Internationalist
Co-operative
newint.org

This month's contributors include:



Dominik Sipiński is a journalist, political scientist and photographer. He covers global political and social issues, often focusing on under-reported conflict and post-conflict situations. He loves travels 'off the beaten track'.



Hal Niedzviecki is a Toronto writer who explores the relationship between technology, culture and individuality. His new book is *Trees on Mars: Our Obsession with the Future*.



Lidy Nacpil is an activist from the Philippines working on economic, environmental, social and gender justice issues. She is co-Coordinator of the Global Campaign to Demand Climate Justice, and Convenor of the Philippine Movement for Climate Justice.



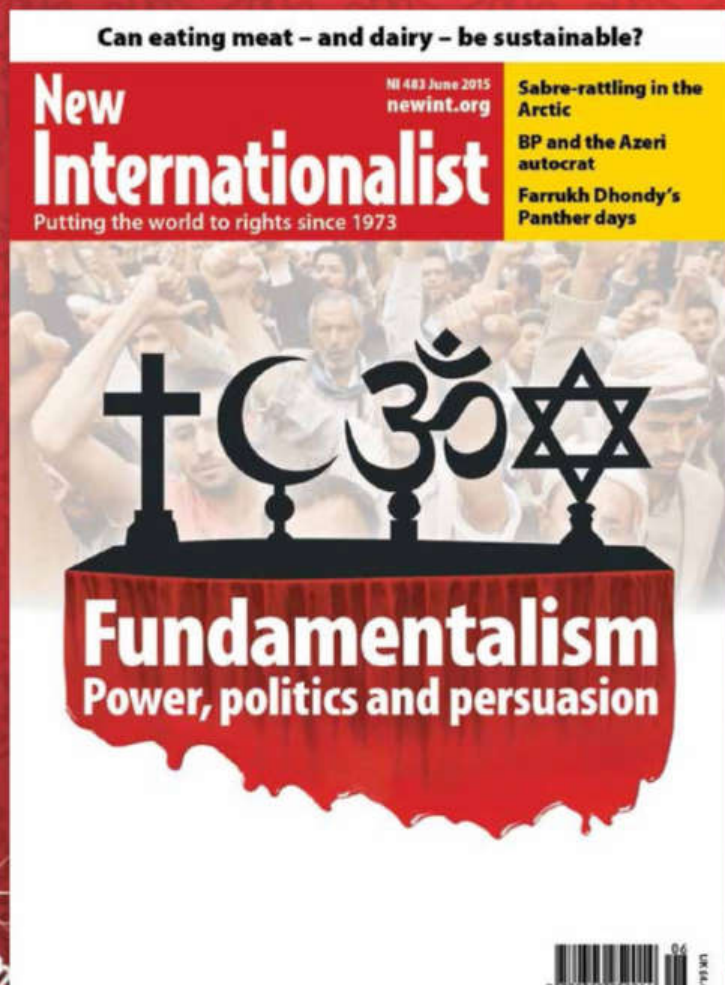
Maria Alejandra Escalante was born and raised in Colombia. She is preparing to attend the Paris climate talks as a youth delegate with Earth in Brackets.

Coming soon:

**10 economic myths
we need to ditch**

**The refugee crisis –
what is to be done?**

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Agenda

Stories making the news this month

- | | |
|--|---|
| 8 Moment of truth for Balkan war crimes tribunal | 9 Lay off the pills |
| 8 Turning the screw in Cambodia | 10 What is killing Central America's sugarcane cutters? |
| 9 Gaza unliveable by 2020 | 10 Azerbaijan: free Khadija |
| 9 Introducing Jeremy Corbyn | 11 Granny training in Lesotho |
| | 11 Carry-on up the Limpopo |
- PLUS: *Scratchy Lines* by cartoonist **Simon Kneebone** and **Reasons to be Cheerful**.

The Big Story – Paris Climate Summit



Emily Hunter / Greenpeace

- 12 **Forget Paris?**
While politicians drag their feet at climate summits, **Jess Worth** and **Danny Chivers** find hope in unexpected places.
- 16 **Views from inside the climate talks**
Arguing over commas while the oceans rise: tales from past summits.
- 17 **China's climate transition**
Is the world's most populous country a climate villain or an environmental leader? **Sam Geall** investigates.
- 20 **A Rebel's Guide to Paris**
Want to cause trouble for the polluters and procrastinators at Paris? **John Jordan**'s top tips for the discerning summit-crasher.
- 22 **What's on the table at Paris?**
Which proposals should we praise, and which should we protest?
- 24 **Still biting**
Big Oil's history of denial, delay and distortion is laid bare by **Greg Muttitt**.
- 26 **'The real power is below'**
Southern campaigners, trade unionists and grassroots organizers discuss Paris, and beyond.

Features

- 38 **A story of waiting**
As Western Sahara marks 40 years of occupation, **Dominik Sipiński** listens to refugees tired of broken promises and dreams.
- 40 **Patricio Guzmán's search for the truth**
Roxana Olivera meets the documentary filmmaker renowned for delving into Chile's dark past.

Front cover illustration: Steve Munday
Magazine designed by Andrew Kokotka and Juha Sorsa.
All monetary values are expressed in US dollars unless otherwise noted.

Mixed media

- 34 **Film reviews**
Brooklyn, directed by John Crowley; **The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution**, directed by Stanley Nelson.
- 35 **Music reviews**
Captain Hume's Journey to India by Philippe Pierlot and Dhruva Ghosh; **Rwanda Is My Home** by The Good Ones.
- 36 **Book reviews**
Stealing the Future by Max Hertzberg; **Stars between the Sun and Moon** by Lucia Jang and Susan McClelland. **Trans** by Juliet Jacques; and **Vanished** by Ahmed Masoud.

Opinion

- 30 **Argument: Is social media doing social harm?**
Meredith L. Patterson and **Deanna Zandt** go head to head.
PLUS *Open Window* with guest cartoonist **Arcadio Esquivel**.
- 33 **Mark Engler** Act against Amazon!
- 42 **Chris Coltrane** How to make room for refugees.
PLUS **Polyp's** *Big Bad World*.

Regulars

- 6 **Letters**
- 7 **Letter from Bangui**
- 28 **Country Profile: El Salvador**
- 43 **Essay Hal Niedzviecki** considers the case against the future.
- 45 **Puzzle Page**
PLUS: **Marc Roberts'** *Only Planet* cartoon.
- 46 **And Finally**
Author **Susan Abulhawa** on healing trauma, the violence of occupation and why women's voices are sidelined in Palestine.

Artists and writers unsettle the politics of reconciliation



This beautifully produced, richly illustrated volume not only offers readers a visual journey into the featured artistic installations and performance pieces but through its creative use of text and graphic design is itself an artistic statement on reconciliation.

Winnipeg Free Press



arpbooks.org

Praise, blame and all points in between? Give us your feedback.

The **New Internationalist** welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They might be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Letters should be sent to letters@newint.org or to your local **NI** office. Please remember to include a town and country for your address.



Identity policing

While I very much appreciated your transgender coverage (**NI 486**), I wanted to make a few points.

First, cis-trans is a binary that not everyone belongs in. Many people who are not cis (because of being, for example, genderqueer, non-binary, intersex) do not consider themselves trans, and do not appreciate having transness thrust upon them by others – it means very different things to different people. A fundamental aspect of respecting gender diversity is not to fall into the subtle trap of ‘identity policing’, where a person feels they have a right to police someone else’s identity or choice of labels to define themselves. It’s always best to ask before imposing labels.

I also think the head/heart/groin graphic to illustrate the difference between gender, sexual orientation and sex is a dreadful oversimplification, and itself an example of identity policing, in that it reduces the validity of someone’s sexual identity to what’s between their legs.

Padmavyuha Green Devon, England

Equals all

Congratulations on your

issue (**NI 486**) focusing on the plight of trans people around the world. Vanessa Baird’s excellent article deftly articulates the effects of the heterocentrism that pervades society.

Until trans people are celebrated and respected as absolute equals, continued vigilance is required by all.

David Andrew Paddington, Australia

Acceptable alternative

‘Per’ is an acceptable non gender-specific pronoun alternative. An abbreviation of person, it can be used in place of he/she/him/her, and perself rather than himself/herself.

Christie Elan-Cane via our website

All eyes on Australia

Thank you for your edition on Syria (**NI 485**). Australia has volunteered to take 12,000 people from Syria and Iraq, after much public pressure that broke through the anti-refugee rhetoric of our government. The Labor ‘opposition’ has supported the anti-refugee policies of the government.

In August 2013 the government said that future asylum-seekers arriving by boat would not be resettled in Australia. This was part of a game both sides of politics have been playing to ‘put the people-smugglers out of business’.

The worst off are those in ‘offshore’ camps on Nauru and on Manus Island (part of Papua New Guinea). There are about 1,600 people on those two camps, with families on Nauru and only men on Manus Island. These two are notoriously isolated and poorly run, with terrible living conditions. In March the UN said that the Nauru detention centre breached

anti-torture conventions. The Moss Inquiry found sexual assaults have taken place on Nauru. On Manus, one inmate, Reza Barati, 23 years old, was murdered, probably by a guard. Attempted and completed suicides are common. Some 2,000 asylum seekers are ‘detained’ in the other Australian camps.

For those who arrived by boat after the beginning of August 2013 there has been literally nowhere to go. There has been next to no resettlement on Nauru, none on Manus, and a bizarre arrangement for Cambodia to take a small number of people, four of them, and the Cambodian government was paid \$50 million.

So people’s spirits are being broken by indefinite detention, with no end in sight. The camps, those offshore and around mainland Australia, and on Christmas Island (part of Australia) are run by private companies such as Transfield, that are interested in profits and not the welfare of the inmates. Remember that these people have done nothing wrong. They have come to a country, a signatory to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, that they thought would help them.

As well as this, boats of desperate people have been towed back to Indonesian waters. Sri Lankan Tamils have been handed back to Sri Lanka (‘refoulement’).

It is up to us, as activists in Australia, to pressure our government to live up to its international obligations. We are up against the largely supine mass media that accepts the government’s deceptions. ‘Detention’ of asylum-seekers arriving by boat has been ‘normalized’, it has been going on for so long. I would ask activists overseas to make their feelings known

to our government. Please, **NI** readers, write to our embassies. Australia deserves the reputation that Hungary seems to have cultivated. Australia needs to know that, as well as the pressure for change from inside, the world is watching.

Stephen Langford Paddington, Australia

Loving a leader

Re: ‘I love you, and you love 20 million people’, **NI 485**.

How to make sense out of loving a spiritual, political, economic, creative or other leader? They are kings and queens among us. In the film *Frida* there is one answer. When asked how she could love Diego Rivera given all of who he was, Frida Kahlo replied: ‘I love him for who he is. I cannot love him for who he’s not.’ Ain’t love grand?

Rita via our website

No entry

New Internationalist has never masked its antipathy to the Christian faith and one assumed that this was based on a detailed study of its teachings. Your September issue (*Only Planet* cartoon **NI 485**) has demonstrated that this assumption was mistaken. When the founder of the Christian faith was detailing who could enter heaven he made it quite clear that it would be more difficult for a rich man to gain entry than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. But the depiction in the cartoon of that heaven as only being accessible to millionaires demonstrates a fundamental ignorance of the religion which you decry. It is disturbing to find that **NI** bases its opinions on prejudice rather than knowledge.

Stephen Carr Zomba, Malawi

The views expressed on the letters page are not necessarily those of the **New Internationalist**.

Penthouse and pavement

Construction activity is in full swing in Bangui, but, as RUBY DIAMONDE observes, ordinary citizens need not get their hopes up.

We stop the car, and gaze upward.

In front of us is a brand-new 12-floor tower block, all sharp angles and concrete slabs behind reels of razor wire. Like a high-rise prison. Though it does have a great view of the Oubangui River.

‘What a monster,’ I say to my driver.

Cedric shakes his head slowly, his eyes almost shining.

‘C’est super!’

Bangui is being spruced up. Everywhere I walk or drive, roads are being repaired and buildings constructed, especially new residences for the ever-increasing ex-pat community. Plus new supermarkets, where we can spend our money on a growing range of luxury goods, from soft French cheeses to chandeliers and high-end mattresses.

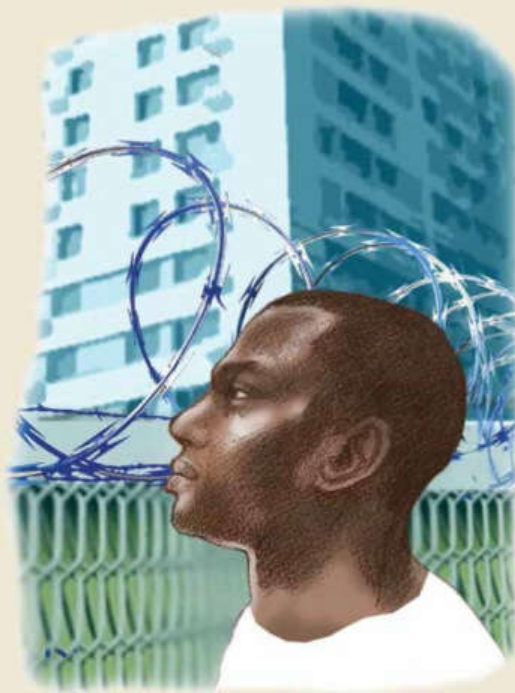
The construction companies are also tearing down some of the old colonial-style houses (and cosy riverside bars), replacing them with hideous modern tower blocks of apartments, like this one in front of us, where each apartment costs several thousand dollars to rent per month. The *visage* of this small capital is beginning to change.

As a result of all this building, traffic across Bangui is getting worse too, as wagons and four-wheel drives battle for space in the overcrowded streets. Recently, the United Nations installed a series of what I can only call ‘human traffic lights’ at the city’s main junctions: individual men and women in uniform directing the traffic while standing on small stationary carousels built to protect them from the sun and the chaotic swarm of drivers.

Some of this construction is necessary – there’s a real lack of accommodation across the city. But the companies erecting these over-priced residences are not Central African, and local people are benefiting little from these lucrative business ventures being pushed forward, among other reasons,

because legislative and Presidential elections are looming.

There are now several different parallel economies operating in the Central African Republic (CAR). First, there is the local economy, where



many Central Africans survive by trading on the streets, growing their own food and quite literally living hand to mouth. Gross national income here is \$470 per year. Outside Bangui, across 15 rural prefectures where the vast majority of Central Africans are small-scale peasant farmers, incomes are far lower and opportunities fewer.

Second, the ever-expanding presence of international NGOs and the United Nations is fuelling this burgeoning economy of luxury apartments and facilities in Bangui, utterly beyond the reach of most Central Africans. And third, armed rebel movements like the Seleka and Anti-Balaka have their own economies, based, among other illegal activities, on mining and selling CAR’s substantial natural reserves of gold and diamonds. The current international

embargo on trading Central African ‘blood diamonds’ has ironically given them a lucrative niche market.

And with each of these economies come political agendas that will play out in the forthcoming elections.

The so-called ‘drivers’ of the chronic crisis in CAR are a combination of political, social and economic factors, including long-standing ethnic tensions, and stark and increasing economic inequalities. I am convinced one of the reasons street crime in Bangui has escalated is because so many foreigners drive around the city in expensive cars, flaunting their wealth whether they mean to or not. No-one has ever tried to steal my scruffy little grey car, nor burgle my house, because there are fancier cars to steal, and residences to target.

More than 80 people have put themselves forward as presidential candidates, including human rights lawyers, members of discredited former CAR governments and at least one fervent evangelist.

The best possible outcome of the elections is a new president with a long-term vision of building peace, reconciliation and the economy at all levels. And the courage to confront toxic foreign interference.

Cedric is adamant the tower block we are gawping at is elegant, and would love the chance to live there, so we agree to disagree.

A few days later I’m stuck in a traffic jam of noxious car fumes and agitated drivers. One of my friends is sitting on the back seat with his young daughter.

‘You know, we are all glad the roads are being repaired,’ my friend says, cuddling his little girl. ‘But my priority is security in my *quartier* [neighbourhood] and the safety of my family, especially my wife and little one. And I don’t see the same attention being paid to that.’ ■

Ruby Diamonde is a pseudonym.

**NETHERLANDS/
FORMER YUGOSLAVIA**

Moment of truth for Balkan war crimes tribunal

It has had a chequered history. Now, the Hague-based International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) faces a pivotal moment. This December it will pronounce its long-awaited verdict on Bosnian Serb politician Radovan Karadžić, after one of the most eventful and complicated trials in recent times.

Karadžić stands accused of authorizing war crimes against non-Serbs during the 1992-96 Siege of Sarajevo and the 1995 Srebrenica genocide, in which over 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys were killed. He evaded the authorities until 2008 and, following his indictment, the Tribunal received countless accusations of third-party involvement, with credible sources claiming that a 1996 deal with peace negotiator Richard Holbrooke, offering protection to Karadžić if he withdrew from public life, had been reversed.

This is just one of many accusations of misconduct which have plagued the ICTY. In 2012, the Tribunal's overall budget was reported to have increased by a factor of 500 since its inception in 1993. It has also been accused of bowing to political pressure, biding its time until key perpetrators have died, as allegedly seen in the case of Croatian President Franjo Tudjman.

Most notable among the ICTY's controversies, however,

is a turnaround on the principle of command responsibility. According to this principle, a superior officer is responsible for a war crime if they knew, or had reason to know, that a subordinate was about to commit such a crime. A succession of Croatian and Serbian generals have been absolved of war crimes due to the Tribunal's rejection of the principle, prompting speculation that Western countries, concerned about how the principle might colour their own military activities, had pushed the ICTY to drop it.

With scepticism towards the Tribunal mounting, the ICTY is under pressure not only to deliver a proportional and acceptable sentence against Karadžić, but also to prove the efficacy of *ad hoc* international tribunals in general. ■

Nathalie Olah



A Bosnian woman weeps over the remains of family members recovered from a mass grave, victims of the 1995 Srebrenica massacre.

Nikola Solic/Reuters

CAMBODIA

Turning the screw

Sim Pov travelled from central Cambodia to the capital, Phnom Penh, earlier this year, to learn from the organizing efforts of urban housing activists. The lawyer is representing some 70 families who are fighting a Vietnamese rubber company in a land dispute; he planned to recreate their demonstrations in his own community.

The rubber company had evicted Pov's clients from their land in 2014 after promising them new plots elsewhere. They are determined to fight back, like dozens of other communities. Over the past decade in Cambodia, with the help of local and international NGOs, hundreds of small and spontaneous protest movements have sprung up to denounce human rights abuses and

the violation of land rights in both local and foreign business deals.

But in August, the Cambodian government passed a law requiring all associations to register with the Ministry of Interior, which will then decide who will be allowed to operate. Civil-society experts say this is a way to outlaw unwanted groups and silence protesters and critics.

A month after his visit to Phnom Penh, Sim Pov was summoned by police, who told him he could not represent his clients any more unless they officially registered as an organization. This is a direct violation of international standards related to freedom of assembly.

It is not an isolated case. In the past three years, more than 60 countries have passed or drafted laws that curtail the activity of non-governmental and civil-society organizations, according to

the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law based in Washington DC. This global trend will affect tens of thousands of organizations across the globe and curb their basic right to assemble and to protest. ■

Clothilde Le Coz

40 years ago...



...the two-year-old New Internationalist attempted to answer a question that it sensed its readers were already asking. The cover mocked up the front page of a newspaper called

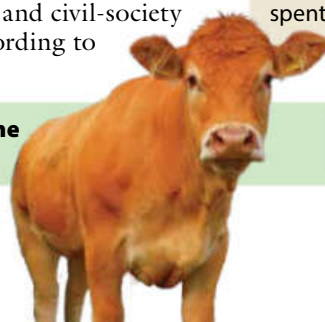
The Daily World, full of headlines such as '10,000 die in famine' and '\$685m spent on arms in last 24 hours'. If you



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Don't forget the brave Syrians in Syria



GAZA

Unliveable by 2020

as the UN raised the Palestinian flag at its New York headquarters in September, in a symbolic move towards statehood for Palestine, the UN Conference on Trade and Development released a report warning that Gaza will be 'unliveable' by 2020.

The people of Gaza have endured three full-scale military incursions in the past six years. The most recent, Operation Protective Edge in July 2014, killed over 2,100 Gazans, injured 10,000, left 18,000 homes destroyed, damaged 17 hospitals and displaced a third of the population. Even before this attack, socio-economic conditions in Gaza, one of the world's most densely populated areas, were already at their lowest since 1967.

Israel's economic blockade of Gaza is in its eighth year. Infrastructure has been decimated by the military strikes, and the aquifer that is almost completely relied upon for water may be unusable by 2016, due to contamination and overuse. By 2020, this damage may be irreversible.

'This is nothing new. Gaza is already uninhabitable,' says Haidar Eid of the Gaza-based Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel. 'The report reflects the international community's widespread hesitation to hold Israel accountable for crimes against Palestinians. It details shocking facts about life in Gaza, but does not say what actions the UN will take to stop these injustices.' ■

Claire Fauset

opened up the 'magazine', you found a newspaper twice the size that was completely dedicated to profiling people and organizations taking action all over the world, exemplars providing their own practical answer to the eternal question 'Yes, but what can I do?'

The actual contents are, of course, of limited interest to us four decades on – unless to marvel at the length of hair of the men pictured or to wonder how on earth the NI staff in 1975 managed to pull together such a vast project for a regular monthly issue (150 articles from

Introducing...

Jeremy Corbyn

Jeremy Corbyn's rise to the leadership of the British Labour Party was a very unlikely victory. Corbyn, a London-based MP, has led a lonely life for decades on the fringes of the party, vilified for his stubborn insistence on socialist principle and militant anti-militarism. He has voted against party policy an astounding 533 times since 1997.

Yet Corbyn surprisingly won the support (almost 60 per cent in total) of the Labour Party faithful while drawing in tens of thousands of new members, all sick of futile compromise and a party that had lost its way. Corbyn's policies include a strong stand against austerity and taking privatized public services such as railways back under public control. He has also called for a broadening of democratic institutions and is reaching out to social movements beyond the Labour Party.

Corbyn is trying to rekindle socialism within a supposedly centre-left political party mired in a kind of go-along-to-get-along centrism. Elsewhere in Europe

and beyond, the anti-austerity movement has sought mostly to create new institutions (Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain, the Bolivarian

Left in Latin America) to express their politics. Can the Corbynists do the same thing within the British Labour Party? Corbyn himself is very much not a part of the professional political class of spin-doctor politicians that have hijacked representative democracies across the world. His modest lifestyle, straight-talking manner and casual dress put him on a different plane.

The British establishment – from the displaced New Labour grandees to the rabid daily press and the self-satisfied 1 per cent – loathe Corbyn and all he represents. They will stop at nothing to disparage and destroy him. But whatever the future, Corbyn has put a real alternative at the centre of British politics for the first time in at least three generations. No small feat. ■

Richard Swift



RevolutionBahrainMC/Wikipedia Commons

ANIMAL ANTIBIOTICS

Lay off the pills

With resistance to 'frontline' antibiotics now commonplace, experts are calling for immediate action against overuse in farming.

The more often antibiotics are used, the quicker bacterial resistance builds up. Each dose administered to a sick

human or animal encourages resistant bacteria to thrive. These resistant bacteria can move between animals and humans – through the environment, direct contact, or handling and consuming meat.

But while doctors are being urged to curb inappropriate prescribing practices, systematic overuse of antibiotics in farming has received far less attention, even though farm animals account for approximately 40 per cent of total antibiotic usage within Britain.

In most European Union countries, it remains legal routinely to treat groups of healthy animals with antibiotics as a preventative measure. Farming industry representatives argue that such treatment is necessary to ensure animal welfare, efficiency and profits. But if farmers chose instead to boost animals' natural immunity with good husbandry and hygiene, lower stocking densities and slower-growing breeds, up to a million lives across Europe could be saved by 2025. ■

Emma Rose

all over the world in the days of snail mail and telex).

Despite the undeniable demand from readers for positive stories to leaven the gloom about the state of the world, the peculiarity is that on the occasions when we have dedicated a whole magazine to such relentless positivity, the result has not seemed to be that popular. In this case the idea of a regular 'Yes, but what can I do?' publication was mooted if the special issue proved successful – but, tellingly, that never happened. ■

Chris Brazier



Kenya's error: fighting terror with terror

Are nomads a climate-change weathervane?

Environmentalists 1, Dutch government 0

CENTRAL AMERICA

What is killing sugarcane cutters?

Sugarcane is the world's biggest agricultural crop by volume, with 17.5 billion tonnes produced every year. But the globe's sugar craving comes at a deadly price for workers in Central America who are facing an epidemic of chronic kidney disease. Kidney failure has claimed the lives of at least 20,000 cutters over the past two decades – many become seriously ill before they reach 40, some even die in their twenties. But new research sponsored by advocacy groups La Isla Foundation and Solidaridad has pinpointed the cause – a combination of repeated dehydration, heat exposure and physical stress. They are pushing for simple solutions: water, rest and shade for workers, along with new techniques for cutting and harvesting.



Vlas Guadamuz swapped cane-cutting for coffin-making when he was diagnosed with kidney disease. He is now kept busy by near daily deaths in his community in Chichigalpa, Nicaragua.

AZERBAIJAN

Free Khadija

Khadija Ismayilova had been aware of the risks faced by journalists in the former Soviet republic of Azerbaijan since the 2005 assassination of magazine editor Elmar Huseynov,

a dogged government critic. But rather than retreat, she felt obliged to honour his memory by exposing the business interests of President Ilham Aliyev, his family, and other high-ranking officials.

Her arrest on charges of 'incitement to suicide' on 4 December 2014 came

a day after the head of the presidential administration, Ramiz Mehdiyev, accused her of treason. When the alleged victim, who had attempted suicide two months earlier, withdrew his accusation, she was charged with embezzlement, tax evasion and abuse of power. On 1 September 2015, after nine months in pre-trial detention, Ismayilova was sentenced to seven and a half years in prison.

The same day the sentence was handed down, US Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power launched the #FreeThe20 campaign to demand the release of 20 women unjustly imprisoned worldwide. Ismayilova, along with Azerbaijani human rights defender Leyla Yunus, was among them. Both are considered by Amnesty International to be prisoners of conscience, and the European Union (EU) has also called for their release.

In 2014, Ismayilova had predicted her arrest after years of relentless attempts to intimidate her. In 2012, for example, she received screen grabs from a video of her having sex shot on a camera hidden in her apartment. The accompanying note threatened to release the footage if she did not stop her work.

Scratchy Lines by Simon Kneebone



Reasons to be cheerful

LESOTHO

Training for grannies

When Malong Pitse's daughter died of AIDS, the 71-year-old widow became the sole provider for her grandchildren.

Pitse is not alone; at least 300,000 AIDS orphans in Lesotho are living with their grandmothers, who struggle to cope with the financial challenge of raising them. Of all the countries with more than one per cent of the population living with AIDS, Lesotho has the largest percentage of children orphaned by the disease.

'Grandmothers play the role of nurses, counsellors, teachers and providers,' says Maxwell Mphwina, project officer for Skillshare International. 'This leaves many of them feeling depressed as well as abandoned.'

But since 2014, the charity has allowed the grandmothers of Lesotho to become providers once again, through a community savings-and-loan scheme in rural Butha Buthe and Leribe districts affectionately

known by locals as 'grandmother training'. The two-year training programme aims to empower grandmothers financially to rebuild their lives. They are taught business skills and are then given a loan to start up their own businesses. With only one community bank in the region, this is financial help they would not be entitled to without this unconventional schooling. The project has already channelled village savings-and-loan-scheme services to 806 grandmothers.

The women also use weaving and textiles skills taught to them during the course to make handicrafts to sell. 'If I make three or four woven mats then I know I will have about 200 rand (\$14) a month to buy maize and soap for the kids,' explains Pitse.

'I used to pray for my death to be sooner so I would not see my grandchildren suffer every day,' the determined grandmother continues. 'I no longer wait for death. Now I am waiting to see my grandchildren grow.' ■

Rebecca Cooke

Instead, she went public on Facebook, saying blackmail would not deter her.

Ismayilova is the latest in a long list of critical voices imprisoned or forced to flee the country. Many believe the US and EU should now apply sanctions. 'Expressions of concern have no effect,' Human Rights Watch's Jane Buchanan told EurasiaNet.org. 'There must be concrete consequences.'

Former US Ambassador to Azerbaijan Richard Kauzerlich echoes this, but such words might be lost on others, such as French President François Hollande, who hosted Azerbaijan's First Lady, Mehriban Aliyeva, just three days after Ismayilova's sentencing.

In the same week, public television station France 2 reported on corruption in the country, provoking an angry response from Azerbaijan, which says it will take France 2 to court for referring to President Aliyev as a dictator.

The Committee to Protect Journalists lists oil-rich Azerbaijan as one of the ten most-censored countries in the world, and reports that at least eight journalists are currently imprisoned there. ■

Onnik James Krikorian
freekhadija.org

SOUTH AFRICA

Carry-on up the Limpopo

Backpacking may sound like a gap-year activity to many, but not to Calvin Phaala. The 24-year-old South African spends his time moving from village to village in northern Mpumalanga, giving people a rare treat: a night at the movies.

Phaala is part of a 14-strong team aiming to bring innovative technologies to hard-to-access rural areas. The 'Cinema in a backpack' project is funded by South Africa's Department of Science and Technology and the European Commission.

Screening movies requires a projector, a laptop and some speakers, all of which, as the name suggests, Phaala carries with him. He also decides which movies get to be shown each week, and organizes the screenings.

Alongside fulfilling a need for local entertainment, the project allows for entrepreneurial innovation, giving people the opportunity to develop a sustainable business. Phaala has taken advantage of the high demand the movie-screening business is garnering to expand his services to food catering at the movie events as well. ■

Cristiana Moisesco

Landmine-free Mozambique

After 25 years of de-mining, Mozambique has been declared free of all known landmines. The first heavily mined country in the world to de-mine successfully, Mozambique has destroyed over 170,000 devices at a cost of \$285 million, using a range of methods, including specially trained rats (featured in *Agenda* **NI482**).

Performing beasts, no more

Circus aficionados in the Netherlands will no longer be able to see wild animals perform on stage after a ban came into effect mid-September. The rule bars animals such as elephants, zebras and big cats from performing but domestic animals are exempt. The Netherlands becomes the ninth country to act on this issue; Britain is lagging behind after a possible ban was blocked in Parliament.



First people, first step

The state of Western Australia has passed a bill that establishes Aboriginal people as the first people to inhabit that state. The symbolic law signals an important breakthrough for indigenous rights, and the reconciliation process as a whole, though Australia has yet to reach a nationwide agreement on this issue.

MakaPads make a difference

For many girls in the Majority World, stigma around menstruation, coupled with a lack of access to sanitary pads, can lead to high rates of school dropout. An entrepreneur in Uganda is seeking to change that with MakaPads: at 60 US cents for a pack of 10, and over five million made already, the papyrus-made sanitary pads are 100-per-cent biodegradable and cheap to produce.



The Paris climate talks are looming. What – if anything – can we hope for? JESS WORTH and DANNY CHIVERS investigate.

At the end of September, something

Earth-shaking happened. After 10 years and \$7 billion, Shell abandoned its plans to drill in the Alaskan Arctic.

Shell's U-turn wasn't driven by government action or international climate agreements. It was years of public protest, direct action, online organizing and legal challenges – particularly by Indigenous communities – that delayed the project and ratcheted up the costs.

Add the global oil price slump and the technical difficulties of Arctic operations, and suddenly the entire project hinged on the success of a few months' drilling. When that failed, Shell was done. In one swoop, the campaign to save the Arctic has succeeded in keeping more fossil fuel in the ground than 23 years of international climate negotiations.¹

Listening to the mainstream media, you might be tempted to believe that this is all about to change at the Paris climate talks, and that a 'good deal' on climate is finally within grasp.

World leaders and country negotiators will gather from 30 November to 11 December for COP21 (the 21st Conference of the Parties to the UN climate convention). Their stated aim is a binding international treaty to keep global temperature rise below two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, to come into effect in 2020. Everyone in the climate world is talking about Paris.

Held hostage

Let's be upfront: Paris is not going to deliver a plan to avert climate disaster. It will be 'a walkover for the big polluters', predicts Nigerian campaigner Nnimmo Bassey. 'The outcome is already known: a package of non-binding promises and non-commitments. It will be another carbon stock exchange. With Air France as official sponsor, polluting activities will smell really good in Paris.'

We already know that the emissions cuts the most-polluting countries are going to pledge (see page 22) won't even keep temperature rises below three degrees. That means low-lying



Emily Hunter/Greenpeace

islands disappearing, coastal cities flooding, mass species extinction, extreme droughts and weather catastrophes.

The entire process is held hostage to global power dynamics, where the 'lowest common denominator' rules. Another Nigerian activist, Adesuwa Uwagie-Ero, explains how the COPs have turned into 'sessions where the powerful browbeat the weak and act in their narrow national interest'. She describes how 'nations like the US, Canada, Japan and Australia openly throw spanners in the works and kick the noisy decision-making can further down the road. The rapid slide down this slope took root at COP15 in Copenhagen,' she adds, and has worsened with every subsequent COP.

These familiar power imbalances between

The campaign to save the Arctic has kept more oil in the ground than 23 years of climate talks



governments are exacerbated by a second, killer problem. A rapid global transition away from fossil fuels is not in most corporations' interests – and they hold sway over many governments. Aneesa Khan, a youth delegate from India who has observed the climate talks first hand, told us corporations are 'hovering over everything. A lot of the solutions that governments put forward end up benefiting the fossil fuel industry.'

Fighting back

There is a different way, one demonstrated by the victory over Shell's Arctic drilling plans. In the words of Martín Vilela from the Bolivian Platform on Climate Change: 'We thought a strong international deal could be achieved that would change politics at the national

level. But it needs to work the opposite way, from the grassroots fighting back against the systems. This will lead to changes in the bigger structures.'

The fast-growing 'blockadia' movement could continue to stop fossil fuel extraction on the ground by preventing new power stations, fracking wells, pipelines and runways. Social movements could work to protect forests and soils by defending the rights of Indigenous peoples and supporting small farmers, while communities get clean energy alternatives off the ground. Then, perhaps, we can force our governments down a more climate-friendly path.

Combined with the delegitimization of the fossil fuel industry through divestment and anti-sponsorship campaigns, this could create a very different political environment where a

You Shell not pass: First Nations activist and singer Audrey Siegl confronts the oil giant's drilling rig on its way to the Arctic.

meaningful global climate deal might become possible.

But that doesn't mean we should ignore this year's climate talks. Majority World campaigners and grassroots activists from around the world identify three areas for Paris action: supporting Southern negotiators; challenging the rich governments' narrative; and building the climate justice movement.

Defending the good, blocking the bad

Some Majority World countries have been fighting fiercely within the talks. Tuvalu, Sudan, Bolivia and Venezuela formally opposed the pathetic 'Copenhagen Accord' in 2009, with Sudan's negotiator branding climate change 'a coming holocaust requiring millions of coffins for Africa.'

The following year, Bolivia's passionate representative Pablo Solón attempted to block the terrible deal. Filipino Climate Commissioner Yeb Saño hit global headlines at the Warsaw talks in 2013 when he publicly wept after his hometown was demolished by Typhoon Haiyan, then joined the protesters to urge greater ambition.

All these countries have subsequently been brought more or less into line with a mixture of threats and bribes, their outspoken negotiators 'moved on'. Meanwhile, representatives of frontline communities whose very survival is at stake have little or no influence over the outcome, and are sometimes even physically shut out of the talks, as happened at Copenhagen.

While it may be tempting to write off Paris or to join the call by some activists to shut the whole thing down, many believe that would be counterproductive. 'The US would love the negotiations to end so it can move these discussions into the G8,' argues Asad Rehman of Friends of the Earth. At least in the UN all countries are represented, have a voice and a vote.

Maria Alejandra Escalante, a youth delegate from Colombia, agrees: 'We need to participate in the UN spaces, because they hold power. Not because we want to legitimize them, or that we think anything really effective is going to come out of them, but as damage control.'

Even though the emissions cuts pledged at Paris will be deeply underwhelming, there are important elements in the text that Southern negotiators are fighting to defend. One is the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibility – which the US hates, its negotiator warning 'if equity's in, we're out'.² Another is the transfer of funds and technology from the North to the South, vital for clean development, adaptation measures and as compensation for the climate chaos already in the pipeline.

There are also plenty of things in the talks that need to be opposed, such as the use of

(distracting and ineffective) carbon markets. South American countries and their allies have succeeded in slowing their expansion, and will need to do so again.

Tom Goldtooth, leader of the Indigenous Environmental Network, lists a bewildering array of dangerous technofix 'solutions' that could also appear in the deal: 'Carbon capture and storage, genetically modified organisms and geoengineering, synthetic biology and nanotechnology, agrofuels, fracking, nuclear projects and energy generation from incineration: all these will do more harm than good to Mother Earth. The UN climate negotiations are about the continued privatization of nature.' Indigenous communities, he says, are being 'forced to negotiate with this reality of capitalist false solutions' in order to defend their rights.

Changing the story

Heading into Paris, social movements need to be incredibly careful what message they convey. The story that is told through protests, marches and other mobilizations must be strategic and nuanced.

Some organizations are getting it spectacularly wrong. Our hearts sank at a July email from online petitionistas Avaaz entitled 'Five months to save the world', claiming that Paris will determine the planet's fate.

It gave us hideous flashbacks to the Copenhagen experience of 2009 – campaigning organizations whipping their supporters into a frenzy of unrealistic hope for a one-off hit, followed either by failure, despair and disengagement or, worse, by claiming some kind of false victory that lets governments off the hook.

Thankfully, this time around many are resisting that trap. Global campaign group 350.org is downplaying expectations by talking pointedly about the 'road *through* Paris' and mobilizing for the end, not the beginning. It has also joined with the Global Campaign to Demand Climate Justice – a network of Southern grassroots organizations and progressive NGOs – in an attempt to avoid the perennial pitfall of calling for 'climate action' but not specifying what that is. The 'People's Test on Climate' lays out a clear set of 'climate justice' goals that a Paris deal will need to achieve in order to be a success, including a clean energy transition, the right to food and land, and justice for those on the climate frontlines.³

Building the movement

The biggest opportunities at Paris may therefore be outside, rather than inside the talks. As Aneesa Khan puts it: 'We need to see Paris as a stepping stone, a moment when people can mobilize, meet up, build alliances for the stronger civil society movement that we need.'

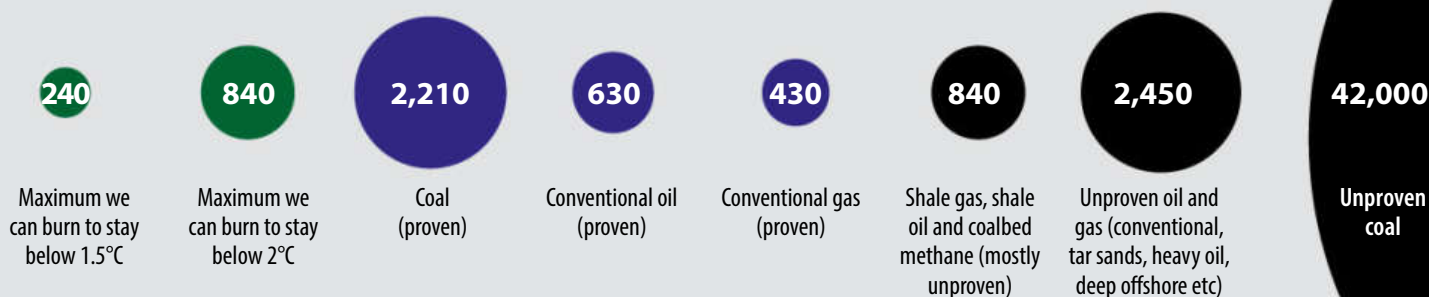
Governments may not have moved on since Copenhagen, but the climate movement has

Asleep at the wheel: negotiators slumber during all-night crisis talks in Copenhagen, 2009.



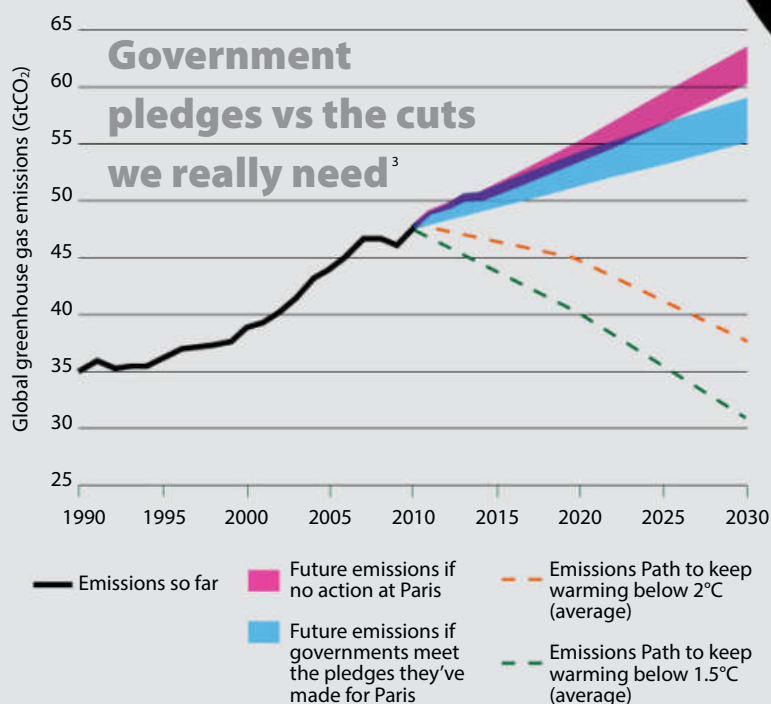
Christian Charisius/Reuters

Fossil fuel reserves, and what we can afford to burn (in billion tonnes of CO₂)¹

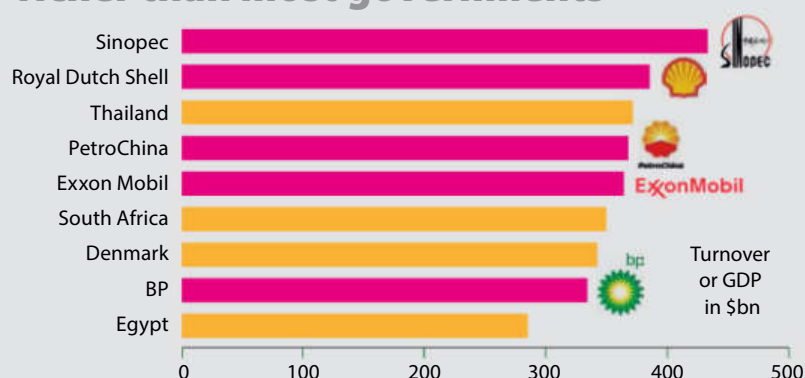


Who's responsible? CO₂ per person since 1850²

(unit = tonnes of historical CO₂ per person alive today)



How the biggest oil companies are richer than most governments⁴



Only 28 governments are bigger than Sinopec, and BP is wealthier than 154 countries

Huge numbers of campaigners and activists are planning to converge in Paris or hit the streets at home, and plans range from record-breaking marches to mass direct action (see 'The Rebel's Guide to Paris', page 20).

Governments may not have moved on since Copenhagen, but the climate movement has. Instead of empty and unchallenging calls for a 'good deal', campaigners are set to invade Paris with critiques of capitalism, economic growth, environmental racism and white privilege. Unions will demand climate jobs while standing in solidarity with refugees. Campaigners will emphasize the need to resist trade deals that could make climate regulation illegal. Real-world examples of energy democracy, frontline resistance and business-as-unusual will cross-pollinate, multiply and take root back home.

'As the relentless drive to exploit more and more dirty energy brings that economic model into conflict with ordinary communities,'

¹ 'Proven' reserves are those in established reservoirs, while 'unproven' are those that fossil fuel companies believe are out there. When scientists say we need to keep 66-90 per cent of fossil fuels in the ground, they are only talking about proven reserves. The figures quoted would give us a better than average chance of keeping warming below 1.5 or 2 degrees. Numbers have been rounded. Data sources: Carbon Brief, IPCC. ² This gives a sense of how much global warming has been caused to give each person in these countries the lifestyle they have today. CAIT Climate Data Explorer, 2015, World Resources Institute: cait.wri.org ³ The emissions paths shown would give us a better than average chance of keeping warming below 1.5 or 2 degrees. Data from carbonactiontracker.org ⁴ Data Sources: World Bank, Transnational Institute.

says Asad Rehman, ‘people are reorganizing and new social forces are coming to the fore, with the potential to transform the climate movement away from a narrow white middle-class elite.’

Meanwhile, renewable energy is falling dramatically in price and taking significant market share. The oil and fracking industries are starting to take serious hits from the floundering oil price and on-the-ground resistance. Institutions worth \$2.6 trillion have now pledged to divest from fossil fuels. Leftwing, climate-friendly candidates are suddenly electable in Europe, and the Pope’s outspokenness on climate is mobilizing faith communities and shaming world leaders.

We are finally seeing the glimmerings of a global movement that could become strong enough to change the political context on climate. We need to lead, so the politicians must follow. But we have to move fast, as our

window for stopping runaway temperature rise is rapidly closing.

Paris is going to be an emotional rollercoaster, with victories and defeats, but we must hang on for the ride. ‘People often ask: “What’s the point of fighting for these things at the talks if you know you’re not going to win?”’ says Lidy Nacpil, a long-time social justice campaigner from the Philippines and co-ordinator of Demand Climate Justice. ‘That thinking is alien to us. When we begin a campaign we never say “Wait – let’s assess if we’re going to win before we decide to fight.” We always start from a position of weakness, otherwise, why would we need to fight?’ ■

1 Duncan Clark, ‘Has the Kyoto protocol made any difference to carbon emissions?’, *Guardian*, 26 November 2012.

2 Jonathan Pickering, Steve Vanderheiden, and Seumas Miller, ‘If Equity’s In, We’re Out: Scope for Fairness in the Next Global Climate Agreement’, *Ethics and International Affairs*, 2013. nin.tl/equityin **3** See demandclimatejustice.org and peoplestestonclimate.org

Views from inside the climate talks

‘The main negotiations happen behind the scenes, where foreign ministers are having real conversations, none of which anybody gets to see. Then you have the formal negotiations, which are 100 negotiators looking at a screen with a Word document, debating commas. Then you have these rooms off to the side, where governments and groups host little conferences and panels. In Lima there was a US pavilion where they were excitedly showcasing satellite technology that could take high-quality images of climate impacts around the world. It was like being on the Titanic, and saying: “We’re not going to stop the boat from sinking but we’re going to get some really awesome footage.”’

JIM SHULTZ, Democracy Center, Bolivia

‘I went to a side event promoting carbon markets. A Bolivian woman raised her hand and I translated for her. It was a really difficult situation, because she was expressing how carbon markets were hurting her community, being imposed on people who had no sovereignty over their land, and she was understandably becoming emotional. But the people running the meeting said “OK, thank you for your contribution,” and just moved on. She was crying and saying “this affects me, my life, my people” but her reality didn’t fit into their technocratic discussion.’

ANGELA VALENZUELA, Earth in Brackets

‘I was a youth observer at the 2013 talks in Warsaw, but I was kicked out on the first day with two others. It was ridiculous – we were just holding a banner after the speech from Yeb Saño [the Philippines delegate – pictured below] in the opening plenary, in solidarity with him and the victims of Typhoon Haiyan. But everything inside has to be sanctioned and pre-approved. So I was kicked out for the full two weeks.’

MARIA ALEJANDRA ESCALANTE, Earth in Brackets

‘The negotiations are like a huge three-dimensional chess game. The US has actively pulled China into a

bilateral agreement, which leaves developing countries with no leverage to get any finance. In Durban in 2011 the EU successfully pulled out the Least Developed Countries and the Small Island States and said “these bigger countries are talking about development. Your narrative should be survival. Your survival versus their development – which is it?” Rather than “our survival and our development are both key for us, it’s us versus the consumption of the North.” It was brilliantly done by the EU. This is what they want to recreate in Paris.’

ASAD REHMAN, Friends of the Earth Climate Campaigner and co-ordinator of Demand Climate Justice



Hitting home: Philippines negotiator Yeb Saño challenges governments after a typhoon wrecked his hometown.

Kacper Pempel / Reuters

China's climate transition

China in their hands:
hundreds in Yunnan province
protest against a refinery.

AP / Press Association Images



Was China really the villain that caused the Copenhagen climate talks to collapse? Has it now transformed into a climate leader? SAM GEALL investigates.

'I don't need China to be number one. Can we slow down our economic development and really deal with pollution?'

'We cannot again allow negotiations on real points of substance to be hijacked in this way,' wrote Ed Miliband, then Britain's Energy and Climate Secretary, in the aftermath of UN climate talks in Copenhagen in 2009. The conference had ended not only with a weak climate deal, but also the widespread impression that China, the world's biggest CO₂ emitter by volume, had been at fault.

'We did not get an agreement on 50-per-cent reductions in global emissions by 2050, or on 80-per-cent reductions by developed countries,' Miliband added. 'Both were vetoed by China, despite the support of a coalition of developed and the vast majority of developing countries.'

British journalist Mark Lynas went further. 'The truth is this,' he wrote in the *Guardian*. 'China wrecked the talks, intentionally humiliated Barack Obama, and insisted on an awful 'deal'

so Western leaders would walk away carrying the blame. How do I know this? Because I was in the room and saw it happen.'

Unsurprisingly, China took notice. In a direct riposte, official news agency Xinhua wrote that 'China showed the greatest sincerity, tried its best and played a constructive role.' A series of state media articles rebutted the claim that Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao had 'snubbed' US President Obama during last-minute talks to save the deal.

It's unlikely China had indeed intended to scupper the negotiations. More likely, the Danish hosts and others misunderstood diplomatic protocols. Chinese policymaking, at least at that time, involved protracted bargaining among elite players. It is unlikely Premier Wen had a mandate to cut a deal, even if he had the will. Nevertheless, today the prevailing perception of China has changed.

China – which is the world’s largest investor in renewable energy and has put in place tough new air pollution laws and other regulations – is now more likely to be hailed as a bellwether of climate progress than castigated as a roadblock. Even Lynas agrees. ‘China has moved a long way, and so has the US,’ he claimed last year. ‘The fact that China was under pressure post-Copenhagen has helped move the leadership.’

This raises two questions. Has China really changed its position significantly? And did international pressure help create this shift?

The New Normal

First, let’s look at China’s transition. In 2009, the country clearly wasn’t prepared to set a ‘peak year’ on its greenhouse gas emissions, which any binding target implies. In 2015, China’s pledge to the UN talks included: a peak in total emissions by 2030 or earlier; a cut in its economy’s carbon intensity (emissions per unit of GDP) by 60 to 65 per cent by 2030, from a 2005 baseline; and the share of its primary energy consumption that is provided by renewables rising to 20 per cent by 2030.

In short, China has shown not only a shift in position, but also genuine ambition. Increasing the share of renewables by that scale over the next 15 years will mean adding some 800 to 1,000 gigawatts (GW) of electricity generation capacity – equivalent to the entire US electricity system. Its plans include installing 200 GW of wind power and 100 GW of solar by 2020.

But on the second question, Lynas is on shakier ground. China’s action on climate change seems to be motivated by domestic concerns rather than international influences.

While China’s climate accord with the US last year was rightly seen as a positive signal, there is little evidence in other arenas – from the South China Sea to cybersecurity – that the country sees the need to please the US, or any other world power.

On the contrary, Western pressure seems to have had a negative effect. Activist scholar Dale Jiajun Wen wrote in 2012 that ‘people like Mark Lynas and Ed Miliband have probably done more to discredit concern for climate change among the Chinese population than all the Western climate change sceptics combined.’

For China’s President Xi Jinping – a powerful leader, far less hamstrung by factions and special interests in the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) than his predecessors – the restructuring of China’s economy is a core objective. He refers to the transition from energy-intensive industries towards innovation and services that provide higher-quality, slower growth as the country’s ‘New Normal’.

This may spring from his long-term economic vision for China’s future – exporting innovative technology is a core strategic aim – but it’s also likely it takes into account public

perceptions, at least where they might threaten the popular legitimacy of the CCP.

Pollution pressure

In early 2015, online documentary *Under the Dome* was launched. Financed and presented by prominent former state television reporter Chai Jing, it had its debut on the eve of the National People’s Congress – the country’s annual ‘rubber-stamp parliament’. Stylistically reminiscent of Al Gore’s *An Inconvenient Truth*, the film focused on the causes and effects of China’s air pollution.

Within 24 hours of being posted on Chinese sites, it had been watched more than 100 million times. Most reactions to the film, which begins with Chai recounting to a studio audience her daughter’s diagnosis of a benign tumour, were overwhelmingly positive. One of the most ‘liked’ comments on Chai’s original posting, on popular microblogging service Weibo, read: ‘I don’t need China to be number one. Can we slow down our economic development and really deal with pollution?’

A week after its release, China’s censors ordered the film’s deletion from the web. A leaked propaganda directive read: ‘Video websites are to delete *Under the Dome*. Take care to control related commentary.’

Significantly, however, the deletion came after China’s new Minister of the Environment, Chen Jining – a former environmental engineer and university president – had publicly lauded the documentary, saying it reflected ‘growing public concern over environmental protection and threats to human health’.

Public concern has been expressed in various ways. Chen Jiping (no relation to the environment chief), formerly of the CCP’s committee of political and legislative affairs, said in 2013 that the country sees an estimated 30,000 to 50,000 ‘mass incidents’ (ie protests) every year, of which the ‘major reason’ is the environment.

Environmental issues have also helped to motivate a generation of Chinese activists. According to official statistics, China had more than 561,000 registered ‘social organizations’ – or NGOs – in June 2014. Many focus on the environment, and many thousands more groups – even millions, according to some estimates – are thought to exist unregistered, or registered as businesses.

The outlook for these groups is often uncertain and subject to rapid change. NGOs are coming under increased scrutiny for perceived foreign support. In 2014, a national security committee headed by President Xi ordered a ‘probe’ into the operation of international NGOs in China or Chinese NGOs with foreign funding.

But other, more positive, signals have emerged too: China’s revised Environmental

China sees 30,000 to 50,000 protests every year, of which the ‘major reason’ is the environment

Voices from China

Dale Jiajun Wen

It is great that China's climate policy has been steadily progressing, but it is factually wrong to portray China as the Copenhagen 'villain' which has reformed. China's middle class would be deeply resentful if they mistakenly perceived China's climate actions to be largely due to Western pressure.

With a high percentage of China's top leadership coming from a science and technology background, the government takes climate science quite seriously, probably much more than the lawyer-dominated US government. Besides, food security and energy security are very real concerns and intricately linked to climate change.

Chinese social movements still have a long way to go. Take the popular documentary *Under the Dome*: while it presents the problem of air pollution brilliantly, its suggested solution is to open up more oil and gas exploitation so China can replace coal. Even if this were feasible (a big if), it is hardly a progressive stand.

Many of China's emerging middle class think they are entitled to a wasteful American lifestyle. They increasingly complain about pollution and environmental degradation in general while scarcely reflecting on their own contribution. The environmental movement in China has yet to address this.

In my opinion, positive policy changes have so far been more driven by problems on the ground and some progressive technocrats who try to solve them.

Dale Jiajun Wen is a Visiting Fellow at Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies, Renmin University, and China Fellow, International Forum on Globalization

Li Shuo

The difference between now and six years ago in Copenhagen is that China is closer to a domestic energy transition. Coal still dominates the energy sector, but a tipping point that was unimaginable a few years ago has been reached: coal consumption

the largest contributor. China has also put environmental protection firmly on the policy agenda like no other issue. We will see strong and continuous momentum for China to act on coal.

Li Shuo works for Greenpeace East Asia

Yu Jie

Being the world's biggest emitter is not an admission of 'guilt': China's large population and its development phase have required a lot of infrastructure building. Although China suffered from overproduction in the past, for the last two years the central government has driven the transformation of China's

economic structure from investment to innovation-led growth.

This hasn't been easy, but the result is that economic growth is slowing and energy consumption is falling rapidly. This shift should not only

benefit the health of the real economy, but also the climate.

There is also domestic pressure from the public for better air quality. Technology, such as smartphones and air pollution apps, have played a big role in building social awareness and pushing the government to improve its environmental information disclosure.

Yu Jie works for the European Climate Foundation



declined in 2014 by 2.9 per cent. The trend will continue this year, with the possibility of an even more drastic decline. This is important for the global climate process, because coal contributes close to 80 per cent of China's energy emissions.

Both domestic and international factors are driving China's changing position on the climate. The problem of air pollution has emerged rapidly over recent years as the biggest driver for action, and coal is

Protection Law permits NGOs to bring legal cases against polluters; and new rules on 'ecological civilization' should make it much harder for local officials to violate environmental regulations without facing serious consequences.

A deeper cut

Will it be enough? China is still the world's biggest greenhouse gas emitter and the transition away from fossil fuels won't be easy.

To reach the globally agreed target to limit warming to two degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial average, one scenario analysis from the International Energy Agency sees China's carbon intensity needing to fall by around 80 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030 – a much deeper cut, by 20 percentage points, than is currently planned.

Many believe China's emissions will peak

earlier than the official target, but it is unclear at what absolute level this will happen.

As the stock market falters, China's leaders see rapid urbanization and the overseas expansion of its infrastructure firms, among other traditional drivers, as being vital to fuel continued economic growth. Whether these investments can embrace high environmental standards, or will simply lock in high-carbon growth, is a crucial question.

For China's climate policymakers, its concerned citizens and its burgeoning civil society, Paris might not be a homecoming for a once-vilified international player so much as the beginning of a long and difficult road. ■

Sam Geall is a Research Fellow at the Science Policy Research Unit (SPRU), University of Sussex, and Executive Editor of chinadialogue.net. He is editor of *China and the Environment: The Green Revolution* (Zed Books, 2013).



COP21 ESSENTIAL INFO

Summit dates

30 November –
11 December 2015

Famous for

Sacrificing life on Earth for
the sake of economic growth.

Official languages

196 countries present, but
the loudest voices speak
American and Chinese.

Population (approx)

50,000 participants, half of
whom are observers. The UN
is no level playing field: while
Sudan and Somalia might
bring one delegate, the US
has hundreds. Some 3,000 journalists
cover the event, hordes of corporate
lobbyists will have privileged access, tens
of thousands of protesters will critique it
and all leave has been cancelled for the
French police.

Most depressing statistic

20 years of meetings, one
whole accumulated year of
talking, over 60-per-cent rise
in global CO2 emissions.

Don't say

'It's not the perfect deal but
it's the best we could do.'
(Talking to the world's media
bleary-eyed after all-night
negotiations.)

Do say

'We are nature defending
itself.' (While locked on
to a piece of fossil fuel
infrastructure.)

Negotiators

The Paris Climate Summit
is not actually in Paris but
in Le Bourget, one of the
city's poorest suburbs.
The conference centre
is in a private airport
specializing in business
flights – beyond ironic.

Greenwashers

A flood of transnational climate criminals are poised to
descend on Paris, to greenwash their image and push
for corporate-friendly solutions which don't challenge
business-as-usual. 35 corporations are footing 20 per
cent of the summit's bill, including car manufacturers,
an airline, fossil fuel companies, fracking lobbyists and
a tax-dodging coal-financing bank. Many peddlers
of false solutions will be found at the Grand Palais
during the *Solutions21* exhibition and at the *Sustainable
Innovation Forum*.

nin.tl/COP21sponsors

Artwashers

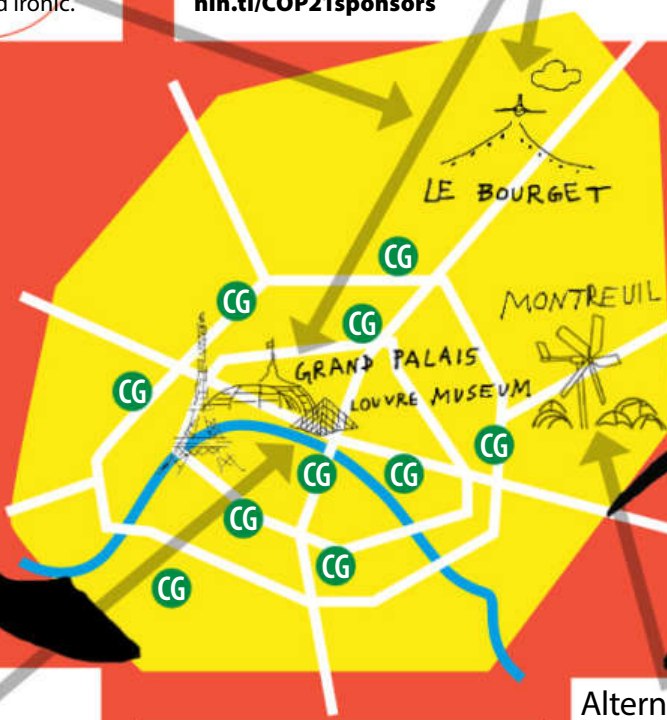
Oil giants Total and Eni
sponsor the world-famous
Louvre, where the beautiful
oil paintings are helping
gloss over the horrors of
fossil fuel extraction. There
are rumours that the Mona
Lisa's smile might grow a
little when she witnesses
some beautiful trouble in
her ancient home.
artnotoil.org.uk

Climate Games (CC)

Take part in the world's largest
disobedient action adventure game,
whether you're coming to the COP
or not. The *Climate Games* is a brand
new form of protest, where play and
politics merge. Working in teams,
armed with courage, a mobile phone
and plans for creative mischief, you
can use an online app and map to
target corporate baddies, report
your action and see where Team
Blue (the police) are lurking. There
will be awards for particularly funny,
effective or media-savvy actions.
climategames.net

Alternatives

The Citizen Climate
Summit will take
place on 5-6
December, in Paris
suburb Montreuil. A
huge gathering of
NGOs and activists,
including a village of
alternatives.
coalitionclimat21.org/en



CORPORATE
LOBBY

WHEN TO GO AND WHAT TO DO:

1. Join the climate justice movement

The dots are finally being joined between the climate catastrophe, the refugee crisis, our value systems and capitalism. Rising faster than the seas, the global climate justice movement could have its coming-out party in Paris. The action will kick off with Global Climate Marches on 28 and 29 November, in cities across the world.

globalclimatemarch.org

2. Take action to influence the talks

Inside the talks, Southern delegates will need support and solidarity to avoid being bullied into complying with sub-clauses that condemn their people to death. Throughout the summit there will be plenty of urgent tactical actions to take, on the ground and online. Keep an eye on the **New Internationalist** Paris Hub for ways to get involved.

newint.org/live/paris

3. Resist

On December 11-12, the movements will have the last word. They will announce 'red lines': the minimal necessities for a liveable planet, such as emissions cuts and finance. Inevitably, the summit agreement will cross these lines. As the final plenary begins, thousands will take part in what could be the largest ever act of civil disobedience for climate justice, by surrounding the summit with red lines and occupying the streets. Sign up here:

350.org/d12



HISTORY: TO THE BARRICADES!

Walk down any Paris street and it's likely there was once a barricade there. No other capital can claim so many demonstrations, riots, coups and uprisings. Over two nights in 1830, 4,000 barricades appeared. In 1848 there were 6,000.

The barricade was turned into a fine art in this once-insurrectionary city. The form was invented in Paris – the word comes from *barrique*, meaning barrel. Easy to roll into place to defend a rebellious neighbourhood from attack by the authorities. The aim was not just to block the street: from the top of the barricade protesters would harangue the soldiers, using every argument they could to convince them not to massacre the citizens sheltering behind it. When troops were convinced and changed sides, victory was in reach.

If words failed to persuade, the fighting would begin, and massacre often ensued. The Paris Commune of 1871 ended with 25,000 rebels killed by the state. A multitude of rebel ghosts haunt this city. Rumours are that inflatable barricades might be on their way...

Illustration: Hemant Anant Jain

REBEL'S A TOURIST'S GUIDE TO PARIS



John Jordan is an author, artist and activist with the Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination and is co-organizing creative forms of resistance at the COP21.

What's on the table at Paris?

Governments have already been discussing the details for several years. DANNY CHIVERS and JESS WORTH reveal how the draft deal is shaping up.

1 Cutting the carbon

What's on the table?

The world's governments have set themselves a goal: to stop the planet from warming more than two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial temperatures. However, they have never agreed to sufficient cuts in greenhouse gas emissions to achieve this; and, in any case, two degrees is now widely understood to be a dangerous level of warming. Many Southern movements and small island states are calling for a 1.5-degree target instead.

To avoid the really scary climate outcomes, the Paris talks should be discussing how to leave at least 80 per cent of fossil fuels in the ground. Sadly, no such subject is on the table – instead, the negotiations are relying on 'intended nationally determined contributions' (INDCs). These are voluntary, non-binding promises of emissions cuts that governments say they will make from 2020 onwards.

By mid-September, 62 countries had submitted INDCs, including China, the US, Australia, Russia and a joint submission from members of the European Union (EU).¹ The inadequate cuts proposed by these big polluters mean that it is now practically impossible for this process to produce a set of global pledges that add up to a safer climate. This process also ignores the crucial concept of historical responsibility. It's only fair that the countries that have grown rich by pumping fossil-fuel pollution into the atmosphere should make the fastest, deepest cuts; instead, the INDC process simply invites governments to make pledges based on what they 'think they can achieve', rather than what would be equitable or effective.

There is also no mechanism requiring rich countries to reduce any emissions before 2020. The only significant global carbon targets anywhere in the documents refer to reaching zero emissions by either 2050 or 2100, with no plan for getting there.

What would be a good outcome?

Of all the countries that have submitted INDCs, only Morocco and Ethiopia have so far pledged cuts that would actually meet a two-degree target. As a result, senior EU negotiators are already admitting that the Paris talks will not result in a deal to keep to a temperature rise below three degrees, let alone two or 1.5. This is why some governments are now calling for a mechanism to 'ratchet up' the various countries' targets at future summits. This feeble deferment of responsibility seems to be the best we can hope for.



2 Show us the money!

What's on the table?

In order to shift away from fossil fuels, many Majority World nations need financial support and access to clean energy technology. Equally important – and often sidelined or bundled together – are the issues of adaptation, and loss and damage. A certain amount of climate change is inevitable (and under way), and poorer nations urgently need funds to build up their defences and pay for the damage. This money should come from the richer countries that are overwhelmingly responsible for causing the problem.

So far, richer nations have agreed to 'mobilize' \$100 billion of 'climate finance' per year by 2020. Unfortunately, this is an arbitrary figure not based on any assessment of what is actually needed, and Northern countries have barely managed to drum up 10 per cent of this already-insufficient goal. To make matters worse, the definition of 'mobilize' is purposefully broad – to include loans, private finance, grants with strings attached, and the reallocation of aid budgets.

What would be a good outcome?

A good outcome would involve larger financial pledges and tougher language that would lead to wealthy nations handing over no-strings, non-refundable cash. It would also include a commitment to a 'just transition', where governments spend money to support and re-train workers from the dirty energy industries, and help them to find decent employment elsewhere.

3 Carbon trading

This is the idea of issuing tradable permits for greenhouse gas emissions, so instead of reducing its own emissions a country or business can purchase reductions or 'offsets' from elsewhere. This concept was pushed into the UN climate negotiations by the US and others in the 1990s, and since then has taken up a huge amount of money, time and effort; but it has had little effect on emissions.

The world's flagship carbon market is the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (EU-ETS). Designed by financiers and shaped by fossil fuel lobbyists, the scheme is riddled with loopholes; since its launch in 2005 it has led to no meaningful drop in emissions, but has produced large cash windfalls for polluters, and diverted political time and attention away from more effective solutions.² Creating a market for carbon reductions also provides an income stream for all kinds of dubious and dangerous schemes, from failed tree plantations to 'efficient' coal power stations to geoengineering.

What would be a good outcome?

The smallest possible role for carbon markets, to allow space for emissions reduction initiatives to be developed. A number of Southern countries are lining up against carbon trading, and could be successful in stalling its expansion with enough external support.

4 Forest protection

Since 2005, the concept of 'Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation' (REDD) has been part of the talks. In 2010, REDD was expanded to include better conservation, management and reforestation practices, and acquired the nickname 'REDD+'.

This all sounds worthwhile, but there are monsters hiding in this particular forest. Because the focus is on 'reducing emissions' from deforestation rather than preventing it, replacing a rainforest with a larger monoculture plantation could theoretically count as a successful REDD+ project. There is huge debate over whether REDD should be linked to carbon trading, which would allow polluters to keep pumping out greenhouse gas, but 'offset' their climate damage by giving money to forestry projects. Many critics, particularly Indigenous groups, fear that REDD+ will lead to investors and speculators buying up forest land to earn carbon credits, threatening the homes and livelihoods of the people who live there.

What would be a good outcome?

Some governments will be pushing to include forestry in more of the world's carbon markets, and it is vital that they do not succeed. It is a painful irony that the – currently very small – role of carbon trading in REDD+ is taking up all the space for debate on this issue, leaving little time to discuss more effective solutions, such as respecting the land rights of the people who live in forests – particularly Indigenous peoples.

5 Whose responsibility?

Here's a phrase that's a bit of a mouthful, but plays a vital role in the climate talks: 'Common But Differentiated Responsibility & Respective Capabilities' (CBDR & RC). It's the idea that the countries with the greatest responsibility for historic climate change, and which have the most resources available, should take the first and biggest steps towards tackling the problem, and should offer support to the countries with less responsibility and fewer resources. This important principle was won by Southern negotiators in earlier climate meetings, and is now under attack, with some Northern countries pushing for more of the burden of emission cuts and costs to fall on the developing world.

What would be a good outcome?

Hopefully, Southern negotiators will get the support they need from both inside and outside the talks to defend this important principle.

¹ New Climate Institute, nin.tl/INDC-submissions

² Scrap ETS, nin.tl/scraptheETS

Still biting

Oil companies say they want to help tackle climate change. Their history of denial, delay and distortion shows we shouldn't believe a word of it, writes GREG MUTTITT.

European oil companies made headlines in June 2015 when they came out in favour of a global climate deal. 'We want to be a part of the solution,' wrote BP, Shell, Total, Statoil, BG and Eni, in a letter to UN climate chief Christiana Figueres. The solution, they say, is carbon pricing and a shift from coal to gas.

However, this was not the 'man bites dog' story some newspaper editors perhaps imagined. To anyone who has watched the companies' disruptive tactics over the past 20 years, it was more one of 'dog is still biting man'.

Funding obstruction

The only reason these companies won any plaudits is in contrast with their US cousins, typified by ExxonMobil. As early as 1990, Exxon was trying to water down the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)'s first report.

In 1989, it formed the Global Climate Coalition (GCC) with Shell, Chevron, Texaco and others, to oppose climate action. Throughout the 1990s, the GCC publicly sowed doubt about climate science while playing countries' economic interests against each other. Papers later revealed that the GCC helped persuade US President George W Bush to withdraw from the Kyoto Protocol in 2001.

The GCC was wound up in 2002, after several members succumbed to public pressure and left. But US oil companies continued to fund climate denial. An internal memo from the American Petroleum Institute stated: 'Victory will be achieved when average citizens understand (accept) uncertainties in climate science.'

ExxonMobil provided at least \$23 million to

climate denial groups between 1998 and 2010. It remains an active member of the American Legislative Exchange Council, one of the most effective US lobbying groups against climate legislation.

Taking the bait

The European approach is different, though the 2015 announcement was nothing new. BP and Shell first attempted to position themselves as climate leaders in 1997, when they acknowledged the reality of the threat, then left the GCC. Then too, their proposed solution was carbon pricing and a dash for gas.

At the time, Shell was struggling with its reputation crisis after Ken Saro-Wiwa's execution in Nigeria and the Brent Spar fallout, and BP was under fire for its links with Colombian death squads. In response, the two companies pioneered a new approach to public relations, working with NGOs while promoting their ethical behaviour. Showing they were progressive on climate change was a key part of the package, and many NGOs took the bait.

Shell produced a series of reports claiming it would integrate ethical concerns into its business. The first, entitled 'Profits and Principles: Does There Have to be a Choice?', won a PR award for representing 'the epitome of issue management'. Both companies boosted their credibility with renewable energy investments, though these were consistently below a hundredth of what they invested in oil and gas. BP's wind and solar investments peaked in 2006 at \$300 million; in comparison, its 'Beyond Petroleum' advertising campaign in 2000 cost \$200 million. Both companies

Drowned out by big oil: 13-year-old Laurel from Children Against Global Warming performs inside the BP-sponsored British Museum in September 2015, as part of the growing movement against oil sponsorship.



Natasha Quarmby / Art Not Oil

Oil companies use the '3-D' PR strategy: deny, delay, dominate

dumped their renewables divisions in 2009.

In reality, BP and Shell's new positioning had the same goal as the US companies' denial: slow down or divert action on climate, to prevent it from impacting their business. It's the '3-D' PR strategy: deny, delay, dominate.

Let's start with one of the companies' prescriptions: a price on carbon. The world's most developed carbon pricing mechanism has been Europe's Emissions Trading Scheme. It has been universally recognized as a complete failure, awarding far too many 'permits to pollute'. Permits have been so oversupplied that the scheme is lagging behind actual emissions reductions, rather than driving them.

What went wrong? Research by Platform and Corporate Europe Observatory reveals that BP was a key architect of a British prototype scheme, and worked hard to ensure Europe's attempt followed the same model. BP and others then repeatedly lobbied for an excessive allocation of emissions permits.

Meanwhile, if the companies want incentives for a low-carbon future, do they also oppose fossil fuel subsidies? Um, no... Shell welcomed Britain providing \$2 billion in North Sea tax breaks in 2015. And when Alaska offered \$5.2 billion in 2013, BP complained that wasn't enough.

Blowing up the gas bridge

If the idea of gas serving as a 'bridge' fuel to renewables ever made sense, it was a substitution, not a supplement: any increase would have to have been matched by a rapid reduction of coal and oil use.

The IPCC estimates that for a two-thirds chance of keeping global temperature rise below 2°C, emissions since the Industrial Revolution cannot exceed 2,900 gigatonnes of CO₂ equivalent. By 1997, half of this 'carbon budget' was left; now we're down to less than a third. At current rates, we will hit the limit in 2037.

Even in 1997, known reserves of fossil fuels already exceeded the budget. Now, using gas as a bridge would require coal burning to stop overnight, and nearly half of oil reserves to be left in the ground.

The six companies which advocated climate action in June have indeed increased their extraction of gas since 1997 – by 76 per cent – but they have also increased their extraction of oil, and show no intention of cutting back. They have blown up the bridge.

Meanwhile, in 2011, Shell led a lobbying effort against European Union targets for renewable energy deployment, in favour of a larger role for gas. 'Gas is good for Europe, and Europe is good at gas,' said Shell's Malcolm Brinded. The company enlisted the UK government, and a coalition of energy companies, to make the case. The lobbying succeeded in ending binding targets for

Member States' renewable energy and energy efficiency after 2020.

Keeping on digging

In 1997, Shell publicly acknowledged the problem that fossil fuel reserves already exceeded the carbon budget. Yet, along with other oil companies, it accelerated the search for more oil. Shell's spending on exploration exploded from around \$1 billion in 1997 to \$3 billion in 2007 and nearly \$7 billion in 2014. As a result, oil and gas reserves have grown, while the carbon budget has shrunk.

BP, Shell and Exxon all now state that they work on an assumption that the 2°C limit will be exceeded, and it is on this basis that they plan their investments.

They justify this by arguing that continued fossil fuel expansion is a moral duty, as it provides energy to the world's poorest people. 'The issue is how to balance one moral obligation, energy access for all, against the other: fighting climate change,' says Shell CEO Ben van Beurden. The claim conveniently sidesteps the reality that the poorest are the hardest hit by climate change, and that decentralized renewables are generally the most effective way of delivering energy to those who currently lack it.

The aim is to portray continued growth of oil and gas use as inevitable, creating a fossil fuel fatalism that undermines efforts to create alternative futures, and becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

When the six European oil companies wrote to the UN in June, they said they wanted to be more involved in climate policymaking. In September, Shell went a step further, co-founding the Energy Transitions Commission to provide 'independent' advice to governments on how to address climate change while serving economic development. But oil companies have no place in climate policy. They don't believe in keeping the world below the 2°C limit, and argue against action to reduce fossil fuel use, while digging us ever deeper into the problem. Whether obstructing from the outside, or putting on the brakes from the inside, oil companies have been a consistent barrier to progress.

When the international community regulated tobacco, it wisely cut tobacco companies out of the process. A similar approach must be applied to climate change. Far from giving oil companies greater access, policymakers should be working to get them out of the way. ■

Sign the petition to kick big polluters out of climate policy: kickbigpollutersout.com

A longer version, with references, can be found at: nin.tl/stillbiting

Greg Muttitt is Senior Adviser to Oil Change International, priceofoil.org

Shell led a lobbying effort that ended binding EU targets for renewable energy

The place where we're actually going to be able to get some movement is at the sub-national level. Sub-national governments are in a position to do a lot, whether it's renewables, changing transportation patterns, phasing out dirty energy. The political equations are very different and activists can have much more of a real impact the closer to the ground the decision-making takes place.

Governments are timid by nature. They tend to jump into things after somebody else has proven it works. So post-Paris, people need to be very practical about where they're going to put their activist energy.

We are locked in a battle with a set of corporate interests that are heavily invested in the status quo and have become skilled at converting money into political power. In *The Art of War*, Sun Tzu said most battles are decided before they begin by the choice of battlefield. The higher up the political strata you go, the more powerful corporations get and the weaker we get. The closer to the ground you push, the stronger citizens' movements are and the weaker corporations are.

Two of us wrote a song inspired by the Lima talks, criticizing carbon markets and the politics of the climate talks. The song called on people not to remain silent and frustrated, but to unite and raise their voices. It's called 'Hombre de Papel' ['Paper Man'], referring to bureaucrats and the technocratic framework.

We performed it inside the conference in front of [UN climate chief] Christiana Figueres and other delegates. Right after the song, the delegate from Bolivia spoke, and he was so touched his voice was breaking. He said, 'Yes, we the Paper Men need to do our work well to secure a safe future.'

It was very unifying. Even though everyone there was so different, in age, political views and approach, the music went to the core of the problem, in which we are all together. As well as practical solutions, we need a cultural change to encourage critical thought and hope that things can be different.

'Most battles are decided by the choice of battlefield'

JIM SHULTZ
Democracy Center,
Bolivia



'There's a problem when climate change is illustrated with a polar bear'

HARJEET SINGH
Climate Policy Manager,
ActionAid International,
India

'The real power is below'

Solutions from the climate justice frontline

'While negotiators dither, ordinary people take action'

NNIMMO BASSEY
Health of Mother Earth
Foundation, Nigeria



'As well as practical solutions, we need hope'

ANGELA VALENZUELA
Chilean youth delegate
from Earth in Brackets



The good news is that while negotiators dither, ordinary people are taking action on the ground. Women are building resilience by fighting big dams in Honduras, and a weaver stopped mining companies from destroying a forest in West Timor.*

In Nigeria, the Ogoni people have succeeded in keeping the oil underground since 1993 when they expelled Shell from their territory. They have insisted on an environmental clean-up and finally the government seems to be getting serious about this.

In northern Burkina Faso, I met the Man Who Stopped The Desert, Yacouba Sawadogo. Over 40 years he has worked with bare knuckles to grow a 28-hectare forest in the Sahel, using local knowledge and technology. In the fight to halt runaway global warming, the real power is below!

*nin.tl/weaver-stops-miners



Developing countries have been very clear that Paris must not focus entirely on 'mitigation' [ie cutting carbon emissions]. 'Adaptation' and 'loss and damage' are equally important.

This is not just jargon. Even if we stop all the emissions now and have renewables providing 100 per cent of our energy, what's already been emitted

is pretty scary, and we will see climate impacts for the next 50 to 100 years. So where is the system, where is the money, where is the capacity to deal with those impacts, in both rich and poor countries?

There's a problem when environmental organizations illustrate climate change with a polar bear plus some wind farms and solar panels. That's not the full picture. Solar panels will not deal with the impacts we're going to see on agriculture, food security, housing and disasters hitting us. We need money to unblock the ambitions that developing countries have, for reducing their emissions *and* dealing with the impacts on the ground.

'There must be a class perspective'

JOSUA MATA
Secretary-General of
SENTRO, one of the biggest
trade unions in the
Philippines

I just came back from a labour union discussion to develop our international platform. We all agree the North should pay, but the North is also composed of poor and rich people, so if they use government funds, that means Donald Trump paying the same amount as a single mother on welfare. And that's not fair! So there must be a class perspective.

It's exciting that this is the kind of debate we're having in the labour movement; last year we couldn't even get them to talk about climate change. People have now realized we're not asking them to fight something new – it's connected to the whole system.

The fight for a million climate jobs and energy democracy is mobilizing people and, as a result, on 30 November the Philippines labour movement will bring thousands of working-class people out on the streets under the banner 'system change, not climate change'.



'The way you mobilize people should paralyse the country'

LIDYA NACPIL
Asian Peoples Movement on
Debt and Development, and
Global Campaign to Demand
Climate Justice

How do we use the power of the movement we are building? We need to change the politics in our own countries in order to win the bigger fights.

When we were organizing [against the Marcos dictatorship and its aftermath] we often said we needed to be able to 'paralyse' the state, to stop or disrupt the regular functioning of society. So we built the capacity for transport strikes, general strikes, student walkouts, uprisings – to bring things to a standstill, to weaken the power of those who ruled over us, and force something to change.

It's not just about bringing millions of people onto the streets – the way you mobilize should paralyse the country, so people can refuse to allow things to go on as usual. We need massive numbers of people who will stop for a day – or more – to say 'enough!' What form this takes today may be a little different from what we did before but surely this should be part of our arsenal.

'The very future of our communities is at stake'

GEORGE NACEWA
350.org Fiji co-ordinator,
and member of the Pacific
Climate Warriors
network

Climate change in the Pacific is about survival. Many of us support our Pacific Island leaders' call for a moratorium on new coalmines, as well as a binding agreement in Paris to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees. The very future of Pacific communities is at stake.

We are also doing a lot of work on the ground with Indigenous people and frontline communities. In 2014, the Pacific Climate Warriors blockaded the largest coal port in the world to send a direct message to the fossil fuel industry. This year we plan to send a message to those investing in the climate crisis.

We are travelling throughout our countries to collect stories of how climate change is destroying the Pacific way of life. We will weave them into traditional mats and take them to decision-makers.

350pacific.org/pacific-climate-warriors



El Salvador

El Salvador is still associated in many people's minds with the 12-year-long civil war between rightwing government forces (backed by the US) and leftwing FMLN guerrillas, which ended in 1992 but left 70,000 people dead. The relative calm since – and the election as president of former FMLN rebel Salvador Sánchez Cerén, who took office in June 2014 – is somewhat misleading, however.

With an average of nearly 30 homicides per day, El Salvador could soon overtake Honduras as the most violent country in the world (excluding warzones such as Syria). Since a 2012 truce between the country's two main gangs (MS-13 and Barrio 18) began to fall apart in 2014, El Salvador has experienced its highest number of murders since the civil war.

The truce, secured by the Catholic Church with the tacit approval of then-president Mauricio Funes, had managed to halve the country's murder rate and had raised hopes that El Salvador could overcome its history of violence.

Imprisoned gang leaders were transferred from high-security jails to regular prison facilities and the Red Cross established a special mission to monitor human rights in prison. In exchange, the gangs agreed to end the forced recruitment of children and young people, respect schools and buses as zones of peace, reduce attacks

on security forces and surrender limited amounts of weapons.

This effort to reduce violence by negotiating with criminal groups and focusing on the reintegration of gang members into society rather than on punitive measures was unique to the region and a far cry from the 'iron-fist' approach of previous administrations.

However, as details began to emerge of what this fragile truce actually entailed, public opinion became increasingly polarized, with conservatives and the media raising questions about criminal organizations being legitimized as well as pointing out that extortion and other violent crimes had not diminished.

When the truce entered a more complex phase it began to flounder as the government failed to deliver money for prevention and rehabilitation programmes. Then the newly elected President Sánchez Cerén withdrew support for the truce. Gang leaders were returned to maximum-security prisons and violence soared once again.

Although the truce ultimately collapsed, it highlighted the inequality and lack of opportunities that allow gangs to recruit vulnerable young people – the huge disparity between El Salvador's small, wealthy elite and the overwhelming majority of the population was at the root of the civil war but is still all too visible today.

There has been a massive exodus of Salvadorans to the US over the past three decades, fleeing unemployment, the civil war, natural disasters such as Hurricane Mitch in 1998 and earthquakes in 2001. As a result, one in three Salvadorans currently lives in the US and remittances sent by them are now El Salvador's main source of income, totalling \$4.2 billion in 2014.

Some of those who fled to the US during the war joined dangerous Latino street gangs there for protection and livelihood. In the mid-1990s, the US authorities began a mass deportation of gang members, who took with them the culture of violence and territorial disputes that now characterizes El Salvador's gangland.

Although the Salvadoran authorities unequivocally blame the violence on gangs, a number of recent massacres bear the signs of drug-cartel involvement. The country's weak institutions and rampant corruption have made it all too easy for drug cartels to infiltrate the police and other institutions, transforming El Salvador into an important trans-shipment point for drugs heading north to the US market.

The Washington-based thinktank Insight Crime describes the patterns of criminality in El Salvador as increasingly 'taking on the overtones of a low-intensity war'.

Louisa Reynolds

At a glance



Leader: President Salvador Sánchez Cerén.

Economy: GNI per capita \$3,720 (Guatemala \$3,340, United States \$53,670).

Monetary unit: US dollar (the switch from the colón took place in 2001).

Main exports: Clothing, coffee, electrical capacitors, raw sugar.

Remittances from abroad accounted for 17% of GDP in 2014, benefiting one in three households. Along with Guatemala and Honduras, it has signed up to the US-sponsored 'Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle'.

Population: 6.3 million. Annual growth rate 0.7%. People per square kilometre 301 (UK 260).

Health: Infant mortality 14 per 1,000 live births (Guatemala 26, US 6). Lifetime risk of maternal death 1 in 600 (US 1 in 1,800). HIV prevalence rate 0.5%.

Environment: As a result of heavy cutting, forest resources had been reduced to 6% of the total area by 1996. Some 75% of the land area is threatened by erosion and desertification at a rate of 20 tons per hectare per year.



Religion: Catholic 57%; Protestant 21%; Jehovah's Witness 2%, other or none 20%.

Language: Spanish is the main and official language. The indigenous Nahuatl language has survived but is only used by small communities in the west.

Human Development Index: 0.662 (Guatemala 0.628, US 0.914).



Clockwise from top left: **Gang leader Carlos Tiberio Valladares mirrored in his prison cell in Ciudad Barrios.** At the time photographed, while the truce (see opposite) was still in operation, this prison was not only reserved for members of the Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) gang but was even run by them without guards. As the photo top right shows, 70 inmates live in cells designed for 20, with beds hanging from the ceiling due to the lack of floor space. The photo bottom left shows police in the capital, San Salvador, searching members of the rival Barrio 18 gang. Bottom right: **Valeria Michel Hercules is supported by friends on the way to the funeral of her stillborn child in the Las Victorias district of San Salvador.** Photos by Adam Hinton/Panos Pictures

Star ratings Last profiled October 2003



INCOME DISTRIBUTION ★

More than two decades after the peace accords were signed, El Salvador has failed to address the socio-economic inequalities that were the root causes of the country's civil war. 2003 ★★



LIFE EXPECTANCY ★★★★★

72 years, up from 64 in 1992. 2003 ★★★★★



POSITION OF WOMEN ★★

El Salvador has one of the most draconian anti-abortion laws in the world, putting women's and girls' lives at risk. Female participation in the labour force is 46%, compared to the male rate of 77%. The percentage of women in office compared to men is dismal. 2003 ★★



LITERACY ★★★

85%. Primary school net enrolment rate 95%. 2003 ★★★



FREEDOM ★★

Labour activists have been targeted; some have been murdered or disappeared. Activists against free trade agreements, environmental destruction and water privatization have encountered repression. 2003 ★★★



SEXUAL MINORITIES ★★★

Homosexuality is legal for both sexes from the age of 18. A law prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation also exists. But anti-gay harassment remains a serious problem and gay rights activists have faced death threats.

NI assessment

POLITICS★★

President Sánchez Cerén has been eager to prove that, despite his revolutionary credentials, he is no radical. He has travelled abroad sending out the message that El Salvador is 'open for business', including a trip to the US to meet World Bank representatives. He has continued with the social-welfare programmes introduced by his predecessor but has been attacked for failing to meet his campaign pledge to increase public spending on education to 6% of GDP. Corruption, particularly within the police, remains a serious problem and has led to widespread distrust of government institutions.

★★★★★ EXCELLENT
★★★★ GOOD
★★★ FAIR
★★ POOR
★ APPALLING

Is social media do

MEREDITH L PATTERSON and DEAN

YES



Security researcher
MEREDITH L PATTERSON
co-founded the field
of language-theoretic
security in 2005. Her
research examines how
errors scale into systemic
cascade failures. She
is based in Brussels,
Belgium.

Meredith

It's hard to answer a question like this, often because of the binary expectation that if a thing does harm then it cannot possibly also do good, and vice versa. The good that social media does comes from the unprecedented rate at which it brings people together, without regard to distance or time. Unfortunately, so does the harm it causes.

The internet's scope also erases human intuitions about the scope of actions we take there. In a room or on a street, we have an idea of how far our voices carry, but a single tweet can fly around the world before its author steps off her plane, as happened to Justine Sacco.¹

The biggest harm I see, though, may be the most difficult to perceive: structural harm towards non-mainstream subcultures. Autistic culture and hacker culture, just to name two subcultures I'm part of, have sharply different communicative norms from white Western mainstream culture.

Both also face pressure from mainstream culture to abandon their norms in favour of mainstream ones. As social-media technology shifts from primarily text-based messaging to more and more immersive real-time messaging (such as Periscope), many autistic users will find that a social environment which used to make them peers with neurotypicals [those not on the autism spectrum], now reinforces their difference and recapitulates their offline marginalization.

I'm all in favour of removing barriers, but reforms must be based on sound reasoning.

Deanna

Certainly the mob aspects of social media have got out of hand – though I honestly have little sympathy for someone like Sacco, who is a communications professional, working in the media space. More deserving of sympathy are the everyday people who are run off the internet for their everyday views and experiences, like the teacher in Arizona who was harassed into hiding after expressing her support for the non-profit organization Planned Parenthood (disclaimer: a client of mine).

What gets to the heart of this question of harm is whether or not it's possible to use the existing social tools and develop new platforms that create empathy and, as Sam Gregory of Witness.org says, *solidarity*. Humans definitely aren't built at *all* for text-only communications – we all know that body language and tone affect how we receive information, but it turns out that's pretty deeply hard-wired into us.

Studies have shown that voice and body language move those messages up to higher emotional processing cortices in our brains,

The internet's scope erases human intuitions about the scope of actions we take there. In a room or on a street, we have an idea of how far our voices carry, but a single tweet can fly around the world – Meredith

while text-only communication goes straight to our amygdalae. The amygdala is our fight-or-flight centre, so, if some tweet somewhere doesn't sit well with us, our brains think we're *being chased by cheetahs* and respond accordingly.

Thus I think a combination of emotionally resonant and connective tools, along with digital literacy skills and education, could go a long way to resolving the current strife we're seeing. I completely agree, actually, with your take on non-mainstream communities particularly suffering under the weight of social norms prescribed by a dominant group. I'm interested in exploring ways not just to replicate those norms online, but to create new cultures of nuanced emotional interaction.

Meredith

In many ways, we're violently agreeing with each other. I'm sceptical of your invocation of solidarity, though. Since 'solidarity' is a rallying cry on both sides of any arbitrary line in the sand, the cheapest way to signal solidarity with one side is to attack people on the other side of the line. Angry mobs have formed throughout history, but social media's unique contribution is to lower the cost and increase the range of both participation and co-ordination in

ing social harm?

NA ZANDT go head to head.

solidarity-driven partisanship. This is the opposite of the empathy we both want to create.

Your point about the amygdala is important, particularly given its role in people's responses to out-group members and group polarization. To any group, universalizing its preferences and norms looks like the Obviously Right Thing To Do. Out-groups disagree.

This universalizing tendency appears even in your reply. Is Sacco 'universally' less deserving of sympathy, because someone in her profession

Hashtags on Twitter can be used to share stories that marginalized voices have previously been unable to penetrate in a mainstream way... When people have the strength and support to do so, they punch through the structures of silence – Deanna

should know better? Or is she less sympathetic 'to you' because she marked herself as part of your out-group?

I absolutely agree we need more nuanced emotional interaction. But driving partisan solidarity and giving winners a mandate to universalize their perspective is the opposite of nuance. True compassion requires us to understand the Other well enough to be the Other if we had to.

When 98.4 per cent of people have a theory of mind that only lets them generalize from their own experience, is identifying with the Other at this scale even possible? In this I share your and Sam Gregory's goals, but not your optimism.

Deanna

I appreciate deeply this understanding of solidarity – it's incredibly important to look at this from the perspective of in-and-out-grouping. I think solidarity continues to play a role in social media with the people who can crisscross and walk in many worlds. Ensuring that those folks understand the privilege they bring to the table and giving them the bridge-building work can go a long way to creating the kind of multi-group solidarity in which we all have the opportunity to thrive.

One of the differences between our very parallel lines of thinking here seems to be that we're talking about many different kinds of discourse conducted via social media. We are using the idea of winners and mandates, an area where there are campaigns and wars being waged online.

However, I'm also thinking again about other kinds of conversation, ones that don't necessarily include that mob element. I'm thinking about how hashtags on Twitter can be used to harass and abuse others, but also to share stories that marginalized voices have previously been unable to penetrate in a mainstream way.

I'm thinking about the stories around sexual violence, abortions, undocumented workers, structural racism. It requires those folks with stories to do an intense amount of emotional labour sharing these, but when people have the strength and support to do so, they punch through the structures of silence.

Thus, I actually don't think I'm a supreme optimist, but rather trying to seek a full spectrum of experience, and ways to strengthen the stories, and platforms, that bring people together in empathetic solidarity.

Meredith

I'm glad you bring up this distinction. There's a race between cross-pollinating solidarity and 'solidarity'-driven partisanship, and too few people recognize it. Even fewer recognize that partisanship is winning.

In an information-rich society where attention is finite, conflating identity with community membership is an appealing cognitive shortcut. The intended product of the emotional labour of hashtag campaigns is such a focal point of unity. We see hashtags to destigmatize depression or debt, but where are the hashtags for the truly scorned, like felons or the seriously mentally ill – the Others people are afraid of being?

In the optimistic long view, it's easy to say 'their time will come as communication breeds understanding and compassion'. But in

NO



DEANNA ZANDT
is the co-founder of and partner at Lux Digital, a New York-based agency which creates measurable emotional resonance. Her work focuses on the intersection of humanity, technology and justice.

the meantime, cheap access to cultural capital is easily exploited by bad actors who establish themselves as focal points within affinity groups in ways that polarize groups even further. For multifocal solidarity to win, a critical mass of humanity must choose to do no harm before anything else, including gaining status. This work is unglamorous, but the objective we both want demands it.

Using game-theory principles here, it is easier to be infamous than famous as long as helping is costly and harming is cheap. Humanity needs an immune system to protect people from exploitative defectors within their own affinity groups, and by lowering the cost of help and harm alike, social media has both accelerated the need for such systems and failed to provide them.

Deanna

Bad actors: YES. I've been in discussion for years on what to do, for example, about predators who operate within communities whose bonds are based on values of justice and fairness. Silence keeps the container closed: they manoeuvre by exploiting the goodwill of the larger community, while victims add up. That goes beyond social media, of course, but I do see these tools as relationship

management ones, and their potential use to model new ways of thinking about, and implementing, trust.

To be clear, I never want to give the impression that I advocate a model of 'your time will come' when it comes to social change and improving conditions for all humans, digitally or not.

This has been a major point of failure of every non-intersectional social movement: 'Don't worry about your ability to vote, your time will come. Don't worry about mandating equal pay, your time will come. Don't worry about protection from harm with regard to bodily autonomy and/or gender identity, your time will come.' Enough is enough.

As for social media's role in accelerating the ability to help or harm, this is exactly why we have to look at the structures that create and support the tools we're using.

If we're relying on tools that are built largely by cisgender straight white men with a narrow lens of humanity, we are, frankly, *doomed*. When we build platforms, our bias is built into the code and algorithms we develop, without question. I'm looking forward to continuing to support and elevate a future in which all of the nuances and criticism are incorporated. ■

1 See *New York Times*, nintl/saccotweet

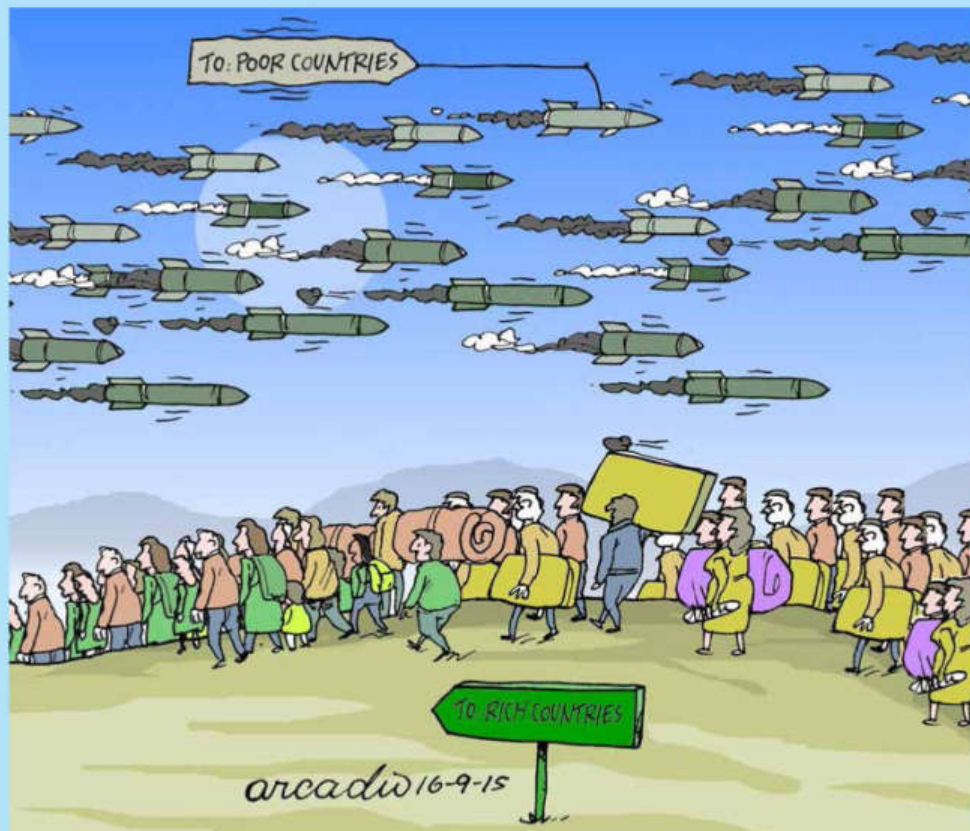
OPEN WINDOW

Each month we showcase the work of a different cartoonist – in collaboration with cartoonmovement.com

THIS MONTH

Arcadio Esquivel from Costa Rica with 'Two Kinds of Migration'

Arcadio Esquivel is based in the Costa Rican capital, San José, where he has been Professor of Cartooning at the University of Costa Rica and has had his own TV show teaching painting and drawing called 'El mundo de Arcadio' (Arcadio's World). He has contributed cartoons to newspapers and magazines in many countries, including Panama, France and the US.





Act against Amazon!

If Amazon.com executives had their way, they would no doubt have trained public attention on some of the upbeat news that has appeared in recent months: headlines such as 'Amazon Passes Walmart as Biggest Retailer by Market Value' or 'Amazon Launches Full Operations in Mexico'.

Instead, the online superstore has been forced to contend with a damning exposé published in the *New York Times*. The article described the office culture at the company's Seattle headquarters as an 'experiment in how far it can push white-collar workers, redrawing the boundaries of what is acceptable'.

The *Times* reported that having a job at Amazon means 80-hour working weeks, fierce competition among co-workers, and punishingly critical performance reviews. Employees are ranked, and those at the bottom each year are eliminated. Some who had to care for sick family members or fell ill themselves told reporters that they quickly found themselves heading for the exit, driven out due to an insufficient focus on work.

And these are college-educated professionals who had secured well-paying jobs at the corporate office. In Amazon's warehouses, wages are low and stock options – like unions – are nonexistent. The movement of workers is monitored electronically to ensure that they load trucks and pack boxes with unending haste. In one notorious incident in 2011, Amazon neglected to install air conditioning in a Pennsylvania warehouse, instead opting to park ambulances outside to treat workers who collapsed while labouring in 100-degree heat.

Following the most recent revelations, some have asked whether it's finally 'time to break up with Amazon'.

I can attest that doing so isn't easy. For years I have managed to avoid setting foot inside Walmart, but a personal boycott of Amazon somehow seems far more difficult. If Amazon is an evil company, it is also devilishly convenient.



Listen up! Amazon employees in Germany have been demanding recognition of a collective wage agreement.

In the US, the online retailer does not merely dominate the book business. It has become a place where, as long as your laptop or smartphone is within reach, you can order anything from wireless stereo speakers to cinnamon dental floss to... well, basically anything. And you can have the stuff delivered to your doorstep for free, usually before the cock crows twice.

The company is said to be working on using drones to deliver packages within 30 minutes of purchase. If it succeeds, its world domination will be complete.

Amazon is already well established in Britain and much of Europe.

Besides Mexico, it is expanding its business in India and investing heavily in China.

The company has often advanced its prodigious expansion by using a position of market dominance to weaken and then buy up smaller rivals. It has attempted to outdo even Walmart in bullying suppliers into providing goods for less. This means that it's not just Amazon's own workers who are squeezed, but employees throughout the supply chain.

Also helpful in Amazon's success has been a pricey lobbying operation, designed to ensure that its tax bill is low and that anti-monopoly laws in the US remain hopelessly obsolete.

The end result is that prices on the site are cheap for individual consumers, but society as a whole must bear the true cost of the company's misbehaviour.

In this context, 'breaking up' with Amazon might be the wrong way of thinking about it. What we need are not people individually choosing to sever their relations. We need collective action and public muscle.

European regulators have set a fine example by shutting down Amazon's tax-avoidance schemes involving havens such as Luxembourg. To expand on this, we need to support warehouse workers' drives to organize and demand that officials in the US bolster anti-trust regulations.

As it redefines the limits of acceptable corporate behaviour, Amazon is conducting an experiment in how far it can push us all. We should take this as an opportunity to push back. ■

Mark Engler's new book *This Is An Uprising: How Nonviolent Revolt Is Shaping the Twenty-first Century* will be released in early 2016. He can be reached via the website DemocracyUprising.com

Mixed Media

Brooklyn (111 minutes)

directed by **John Crowley**

Eilis, a shy, thoughtful young woman leaves County Wexford for New York, and meets Tony, a sweet, handsome young man, an Italian-American plumber. When a family death takes her back home, newly confident, wiser, and desirable, she's a catch even for Jim, the blazered but sensitive son of the local hotelier. Who does she choose? Where does she belong? Whose heart does she break? This is, on the face of it, a conventional story, but do not be put off! Respectful of Colm Tóibín's focused, affectionate novel of migration, coming of age, a woman's choice, Eilis's story carries worlds with it and is convincing and deeply affecting.

Two early scenes set the tone. Eilis, stands at the ship's rail, about to leave Ireland, with other young women, looking down at the quayside at their mothers looking up at them, probably for the last time. Later, getting settled in Brooklyn, Eilis helps out at a church Christmas dinner for single elderly Irish men, men whose labour has built the city. This is a story about a young woman that opens up to so much more, and so many other lives – family and small town life, Ireland's underdevelopment, the US and modernity, and women coming into their own.

The uncluttered period settings and storytelling puts the



Eilis and Tony in *Brooklyn* – a story of migration, modernity and much more.

focus on people's faces, their feelings, attitudes, hopes and fears. Rose, Eilis's sister hardly appears, but her self-sacrifice opens up possibilities for Eilis. People are representative, but real, and there are marvellous social interactions on the boat, in Eilis's Brooklyn lodging house, and in the shops and office where she works. This is one young woman's story, but it's at once focused and expansive. The sense that she's part of a great movement of people in time and place, of broader loss, sacrifice and transience, as well as possibilities, makes this profoundly moving.

★★★★★ ML

The Black Panthers

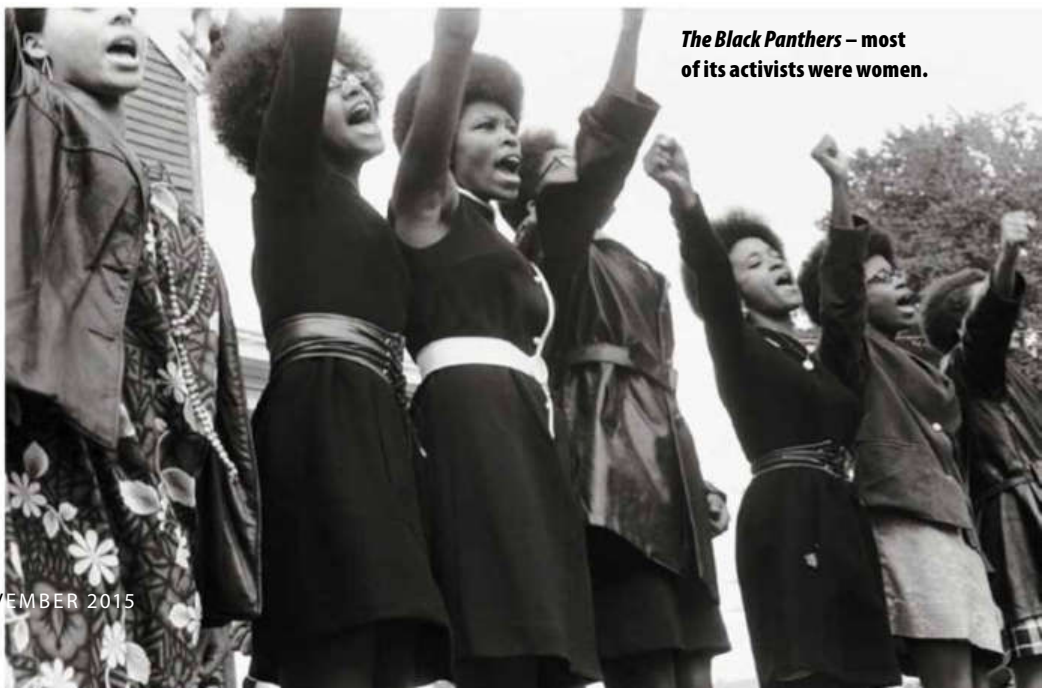
Vanguard of the Revolution (113 minutes)

written and directed by **Stanley Nelson**

The Black Panthers inspired and activated not only a generation of urban Black Americans, but liberationists and revolutionaries of many hues, both across the US (which was what made them such a threat) and beyond.

Founded in 1966, in Oakland, California, openly and legally carrying guns, as they tailed police patrols to protect the Black community against police harassment and violence, they drew massive publicity and their look – black leather jackets, black berets and Afros – became iconic.

Nelson's detailed doc, with superb contemporary soundtrack, film and photography, and interviews with Panthers, historians and cops, gives the wider, little known, history. Most of its activists were women, and it built a social base with free pre-school breakfasts, clinics, and drug and alcohol rehabilitation centres. It drew in celebrity supporters – Jane Fonda, Marlon Brando, John Lennon – and started to link with the US Left and anti-war and women's movements. And it fatally drew upon itself the full weight of the FBI under J Edgar Hoover.



The Black Panthers – most of its activists were women.

Never a democratic organization, and run by charismatic individuals with big egos, and different aims and methods, it was no match for the FBI's infiltration, provocations and assassinations. It's an eye-opening, bloody and tragic history, though this is probably not the full story – why does Angela Davis not appear? The relevance to the US today, though, is clear.

★★★★ ML

FILM

Captain Hume's Journey to India

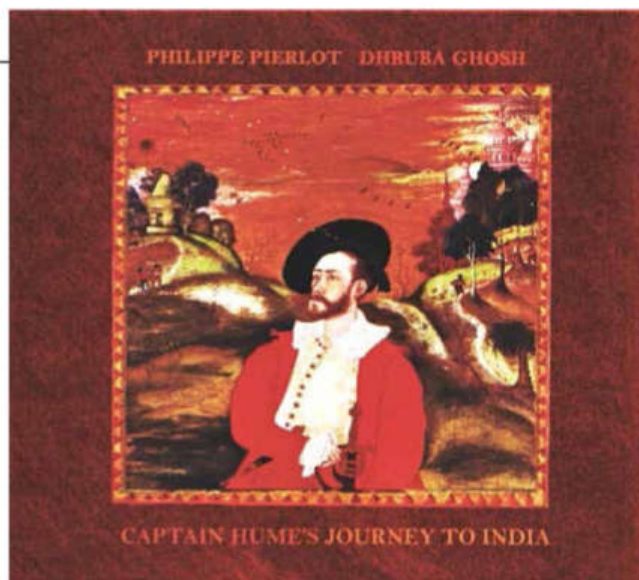
by **Philippe Pierlot** and **Dhruba Ghosh** (Flora 1006 CD)

Rarely has East met West in such a beguiling record of a musical encounter. In 1600, Captain Tobias Hume, mercenary, musician dedicated to the then-unfashionable viol and an approximate contemporary of Shakespeare, travelled to India with the East India Company and there he met a *sarangi* player... maybe. That Hume himself existed is known, that his compositions exist is certain, but there is less evidence that he visited India at all. No matter, for Belgian early music specialist Philippe Pierlot (bass viol player) and Indian sarangi master Dhruba Ghosh, have done the travelling for him.

In the main, **Captain Hume's Journey to India** consists of Hume's own compositions for viol. Dances, airs, a galliard from Pierlot's six-string viol create a stately, formal atmosphere. And then, following an expressive 'I Am Melancholy', the journey itself takes over and the recording cedes to the sounds of Ghosh's sarangi, plus the tabla and tanpura from Nitiranjana Biswas and Roselyne Simpelaere respectively. The signal that we have moved is 'Sunrise by the River', a beautiful, floating 10-minute instrumental



Early music specialist Philippe Pierlot



Captain Hume's Journey to India – richly imagined, beautifully realized.

that introduces the hazy drone typical of much Indian string instrumentation. We are now in a place of rich imaginings, with the sharply rapped tabla trills matching the formality of Hume's own composition. The musical conversation, in which all instruments come together, is continued with material from both Hume and the contemporary musicians. Richly imagined and beautifully realized, this is a haunting reconnaissance.

★★★★★ LG

harmoniamundi.com

Rwanda Is My Home

by **The Good Ones** (Independent Records 091 CD, LP + download)

Janvier Havugimana, Adrien Kazigira and Stanislas Hitimani: three Rwandan farmers who count Hutus, Tutsis and Twa people among their families. Three men who survived their country's 1994 genocide and, joined by singer Javon Mahoro, have come together to sing unadorned and powerful songs about love.

Sung in their native Kinyarwanda, **Rwanda Is My Home** is the band's second album after Kigali y'Izahabu (Kigali of Gold), the 2010 debut, also produced by Ian (Tinariwen) Brennan. Despite the new album's title, its 11 songs are either in Kinyarwanda or French with, annoyingly, no translations of the songs beyond their titles. There is a low-fi immediacy to **Rwanda Is My Home** and its acoustic guitars and percussion, even if it lacks the atmospheric sounds (dogs barking and passing cars) that made its predecessor so homely. The songs meander gently through their material: the theme of love and relationships can be extended to community relations, and here the importance of harmony, literally and metaphorically, is key.

But the knowledge and the legacy of genocide are never far away from this. 'Nyamwabga Kumva' ('Stubborn to the End'), all fingerpicked guitar and lilting vocals, was written



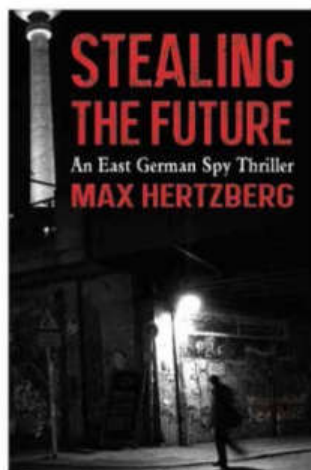
Rwanda Is My Home
– genocide survivors
get together.

by Manassae Havugimana, brother to lead singer Janvier. He was murdered in 1994.

★★★ LG

independentrecordsltd.co.uk

MUSIC



Stealing the Future

by **Max Hertzberg**

(Wolf Press, ISBN 978-0-9933247-0-3)

East Berlin, early 1990s: a murder, a political intrigue and a diplomatic dance. So far, so predictable for a spy story based in the dark and gritty post-Communist era just after the fall of the Berlin Wall. But Max Hertzberg's first novel has an interesting premise: the German Democratic Republic has decided not to join West Germany, but to go it alone – to form a 'Grassroots Democratic Republic' from which a true socialist utopia will emerge.

Protagonist Martin Grobe's investigation into the murder of prominent politician Hans Meier at a mine in West Silesia – a region looking to secede from the GDR – unfolds

along familiar spy-thriller lines. Author Hertzberg is a Stasi files researcher and his deep knowledge of Berlin and understanding of the social and political upheavals of the time help him to create an authentic atmosphere of tension and uncertainty.

But the true brilliance of **Stealing the Future** lies beyond this, in the honest portrayal of a young country and its idealistic inhabitants struggling to keep alive their dream of freedom, justice and equality in the face of international and domestic opposition. Embarking on a social experiment to create something better is hard work, concedes Grobe. But it is also a responsibility that we all share.

★★★★ JL

wolfpress.co.uk

BOOKS Stars between the Sun and Moon

by **Lucia Jang** and **Susan McClelland** (WW Norton and Company, ISBN 9780393249224)

This is the harrowing true story of Sunhwa [not her real name], a North Korean refugee who details her escape from Kim Il-Sung's totalitarian regime. From a childhood filled with adoration for the Supreme Father, to the long famine years of the 1990s, also known as the Arduous March years, Sunhwa's fate is a tragic one, with little hope for the future. The fact that she managed to escape, travelling through China, Mongolia and South Korea, finally reaching Canada, where she now lives, seems to be a stroke of good luck – many others in her situation did not survive.

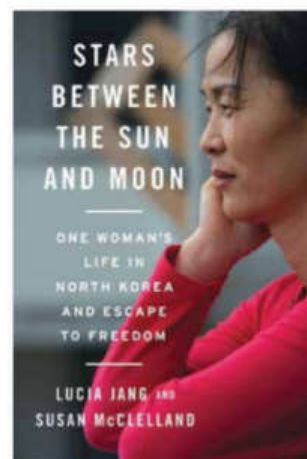
As she tells her story, the narrative touches on different aspects of North Korean life: there are hints at the strict *songbun* caste

system, prevalent even in the 'egalitarian' Communist society; the budding, independently run black market during the famine years – as well as vivid descriptions of the harsh punishments for trading capitalist-style.

Unfortunately, what the book doesn't do is place Sunhwa's story in context, depriving readers of a deeper understanding of what is a very complex political regime. **Stars between the Sun and Moon** reads more like a transcript of interviews, which is fitting, seeing as that's how Sunhwa told her story to journalist Susan McClelland – but that, sadly, is not enough to make for an engaging read.

★★★ CM

wwwnorton.co.uk



Trans

by **Juliet Jacques** (Verso ISBN 9781784781644)

In 2010 British writer Juliet Jacques underwent sex reassignment surgery and began to write about the experiences in a series of extraordinarily candid and detailed blogs for the hitherto somewhat transphobic *Guardian* newspaper.

This book contains some of that material, and much more besides. Jacques has written an eloquent, moving and at times witty memoir that takes us from her 1980s post-punk-fuelled adolescence to the present day, while providing acute observation of the intricacies and absurdities that surround gender. Given that the author's passion is art and popular culture, it's hardly surprising that woven into the narrative are her personal responses to a wide

range of works, including Pedro Almodovar's *All About my Mother* and Neil Jordan's *The Crying Game*. (The latter the young Jacques could not bear to watch to the end – only later did she learn that the vomiting scene was not the miserable end of the story.)

Trans has a strong underlying political purpose and Jacques tackles head-on issues like 'trans exclusive radical feminism' as well as the realities of sexual harassment and transphobia. But it's her personal story that really carries the politics, that shows just how much courage is needed, how painful and dangerous it can be to be trans and oneself in a world deeply and fiercely wedded to binary gender conformity; and how much that needs to change.

★★★★ VB

versobooks.com

Vanished

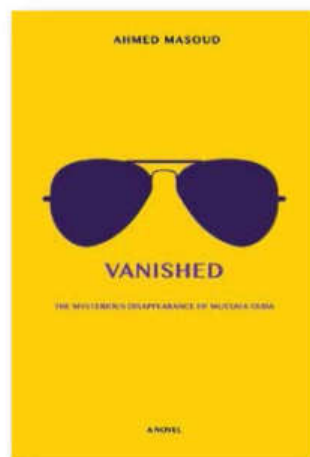
by **Ahmed Masoud** (Rimal Publications, ISBN 9789963715138)

Subtitled 'The Mysterious Disappearance of Mustafa Ouda', Ahmed Masoud's fine novel is a highly charged tale of loss and betrayal; of bad choices made in worse circumstances. Set in Gaza and spanning three decades from the 1980s to the present day, the book tells of Omar Ouda's search for his father, Mustafa, who disappeared one night from the family home. Was he abducted by the occupying Israeli forces? Was he caught up in the internecine struggles between rival Palestinian groups? Or were there family reasons, unfathomable to the young Omar, for his father's abrupt departure? The time frame of the novel is important, covering as it does the first and second Palestinian Intifadas and the Oslo Peace Accords. Omar's quest, abetted by

his faithful friend Ahmed, brings him to the attention of the Israeli military and he is forced to choose between his family and his community, making decisions no young boy should have to face. He is, by dint of circumstance, led to an understanding of the realities of life in Gaza under brutal occupation, and both he and the reader come to appreciate the ineluctable necessity of resistance.

The author skilfully plots Omar's journey from innocent child to unwilling informer to conflicted freedom fighter. The revelations about his father, when they arrive, are both surprising and developed satisfyingly from the plot. **Vanished** is an accomplished novel that, quietly and without didacticism, gets to the heart of the terrible sacrifices demanded of a people living in a state of permanent, unrelenting siege.

★★★★ PW
rimalbooks.com



Also out there...

MUSIC A superlative release:

Billy Bragg, Martin Carthy, some **Watersons, Jarvis Cocker** and many others pitch in to *Joy of Living: A Tribute to Ewan MacColl* (Cooking Vinyl), a double CD that marks the centenary of the great musician and activist's birth. Really, it's a joy. And there's magic in **Youssou N'Dour** and **Le Super Etoile de Dakar's**

Fatteliku (Real World), a live recording from 1987 Athens and a lovely reminder of the youthful singer's energy.



Corbyn. As the socialist surge gathers in Europe, some apposite new titles are hot off the press. **What Would Keir Hardie Say?** (Luath Press) is a highly readable collection of essays edited by Pauline Bryan. It's lively and fascinating, both historically, and as an exploration of Hardie's vision and relevance to politics today. **Five Million Conversations**



(Luath Press) is BBC journalist Iain Watson's more gossipy and less inspiring account of how Labour lost an election – but, as the book says, 'rediscovered its roots'. It ends with Corbyn's surprise party leader election victory, with a huge popular mandate. Finally, there's **Syriza** (Pluto Press: Left Book Club), which takes us to Greece, and the remarkable story of how a leftist party, headed by former communist student leader Alexis Tsipras, beat the complacent and corrupt political establishment to win,



first, the January 2015 general election, then the referendum in July 2015 (the result of which it was then forced to ignore!) leading to another snap election in September. Kevin Ovenden, who has followed Greek politics for 25 years, does a good job of making sense of turbulence, helpfully situating Syriza in the context of Greek political history. There is plenty of first-hand reporting and 'inside' material here too, both on the battles within and on the international stage (remember Yannis Varoufakis?) with the hated *troika*.



FILM *Suffragette*, like script-writer Abi Morgan's earlier *Iron Lady*, loses much of the politics in focusing on the personal. Carey Mulligan is subtle and moving as the laundry worker who becomes an activist and the commitment and sacrifice in the face of brutal state repression is well done. But the social impact of the First World War doesn't figure, nor does Emmeline Pankhurst's (Meryl Streep again) white feather activism and conservatism. The doc *I Believe in*

Miracles is the extraordinary story of Brian Clough, a charismatic, anti-establishment and rather camp football manager, who, before the big-money era, inspired tough old pros and teenagers to express themselves, and commit to each other, and tick the club from the English second tier to champions of Europe.

BOOKS 'My work has consisted of trying to stir up a divine discontent with wrong,' said socialist pioneer and first leader of the British Labour Party Kier Hardie, to be quoted recently by another stirrer, the Labour Party's new leftwing leader Jeremy

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STAR RATING

★★★★★ EXCELLENT ★★★★★ VERY GOOD ★★★ GOOD ★★ FAIR ★ POOR



A story of waiting

Carrying a gun to symbolize the independence war of 1975-91, a Saharawi boy takes part in an annual parade at a refugee camp in Algeria. He is part of a generation that has never seen its homeland.

After 40 years of exile, patience is wearing thin among Western Saharan refugees. With no sign of the long-promised referendum on independence, some consider ending the 24-year ceasefire with Morocco their only option. DOMINIK Sipiński reports.

When refugees from Western Sahara mark the 40th anniversary of the occupation of their country by Morocco this November, many of them will discuss attacking the 2,700-kilometre wall that separates them from their home.

Patience has been a key value for the Saharawi, but it has its limits. Younger members of the estimated 120,000 refugees living in five camps in western Algeria have never seen their country.

‘We were born here; we live here. But we do not want to die here in the desert, because this is not Western Sahara,’ says Ilbu, a young Saharawi refugee whose dream is to become a photojournalist.

Theoretically speaking, the Moroccan-Saharawi ceasefire signed under the auspices of the UN in 1991 paved the way to independence. The international community decided there should be a referendum among

the Saharawi, a standard way of solving post-colonial statehood debates. The goal of MINURSO, a UN peacekeeping mission, was to facilitate the vote as early as 1992.

Since then, Morocco has blocked the process, unwilling to cede control over Western Sahara. The UN has been too weak to force progress and the powerless Saharawi have been left grinding their teeth in anger. The referendum is no more likely today than it was in the 1970s, when the UN first suggested it.

‘We do not ask for much. We do not ask for money or help; just a ballot paper in which we can determine the independence of our country,’ says Bouhabini Yahia, president of the Saharawi Red Crescent.

Yahia, a committed humanitarian, does not want to admit openly what most refugees acknowledge: appeals such as his fall on deaf ears, and have done so for 40 years.

The misery began in 1975. Spain, a colonizer of the territory, was in a shambles. Its dictator, General Franco, was dying, and so was his regime. Western Sahara, a colony the size of the UK, but inhabited by fewer than 100,000 people, was an unwanted burden. Unwilling to engage in a complicated process of self-determination, the Spanish regime secretly partitioned Western Sahara between Morocco and Mauritania.

Both countries sent in their armies. Morocco also brought in over 300,000 civilians, in the

Photos: Dominik Sipiński

so-called Green March. The Saharawi nomads, relatively well-off but few in number and poorly armed, had no chance of resisting the invasion.

The Moroccan air force forced the Saharawi out to Algeria by bombing them with napalm and white phosphorus. The nomads settled in refugee camps and launched a partisan war. They enjoyed some success, forcing Mauritania to withdraw and sign peace accords, but Morocco was too strong for them.

A situation sealed

In the 1980s, Morocco built a wall across the desert protected by landmines to ward off Saharawi raids. Major powers turned a blind eye. None of them recognized the independence of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), which had been proclaimed by the

'We achieved more international recognition during the war with Morocco than during the years of peace. The international community thinks that if nobody is dying here, then there is no crisis'

leftist and secular Polisario Front in 1976. Only the African Union (AU) backed the Saharawi and expelled Morocco. (To this day, Morocco is the sole African country not part of the AU.)

The 1991 ceasefire effectively sealed this situation: Morocco controls some three-quarters of Western Sahara, including all of its territorial waters, which are rich in fish and, possibly, oil. The SADR, now a quasi-state with ministries, elections and a football team, controls the remaining part, referred to as the Liberated Territories.

'This is a very unusual group of refugees – they came here for political reasons, not seeking opportunities. There are no opportunities here,' stresses Yahia. 'From the very beginning, they had a political project: to build a functioning state in exile, easy to transpose to the independent Western Sahara.'

For the Saharawi who remained in occupied Western Sahara rights are scarce. Moroccan police brutally suppress any pro-independence movements. Foreign journalists are banned from the territory which Morocco refers to as the 'Southern Province'.

'We have a saying here: "In the Sahara, everything is late". Our lives have been a story of waiting – for a referendum, for independence, for a return to our country,' says Bene, a 27-year-old Saharawi living in the largest camp – Smara.

Like many refugees, he benefited from the

support of Algeria, and studied there. After graduation, he returned to the camps. Now, although a qualified IT specialist, he owns a small shop in Smara selling anything from traditional garments to cleaning supplies.

'I am not happy with my business. It brings me relatively good money, but I want to use my education. In our situation, education is pointless,' he says resignedly.

But despite his pessimism, Bene still thinks that a peaceful path to independence is possible, if the Saharawi authorities can promise more economic benefits to the US and the European Union. Many of his fellow refugees, however, have lost hope.

'People see that the UN does not work; they see that only force works. We have a reason to fight, and as Muslims we believe that if we die for our country, we go to heaven,' says Ilbu.

The official line of Polisario, the only party in the SADR, is one of a peaceful resolution. Every year, there is hope that the UN will strengthen MINURSO's mandate, at the very least giving it the right to monitor the human rights situation in the occupied territory. It is the only UN peacekeeping mission without such a right.

The mission's mandate is renewed annually, but because of French support for Morocco, any changes are blocked. Last year, SADR's prime minister, Abdelkader Taleb Omar, admitted that if this continues, he will explore other means of action.

Western Sahara's frustrated youth have been saying the same thing for a while now, and their threats are less veiled. MINURSO is worried and its concerns are passed on to the UN Secretary General in the mission's annual reports. Speaking off the record, MINURSO field representatives in Tindouf, an Algerian city near the camps, admit that, if violence erupts, they can do very little to stop it.

'The youth have seen that we achieved much more international recognition during the 24 years of war with Morocco than during the years of peace. The international community thinks that if nobody is dying here, then there is no crisis, and they do not do anything,' explains Zain Sidahmed, former head of UJSARIO, Polisario's youth wing.

Most younger refugees admit that they stand no chance against the US-trained Moroccan army. 'We have a weaker army. But in two, three, maybe five years, things will explode,' says Ilbu. 'The authorities want to stop us, but the youth want to go to war.' ■



A proud people: national flags and symbols feature prominently in this small shop in the Smara refugee camp in the Algerian desert.

Dominik Sipiński is a freelance journalist reporting on conflicts, global politics and social issues.



Patricio Guzmán's search for the truth

Acclaimed for his epic film *The Battle of Chile: the Fight of an Unarmed People*, Patricio Guzmán has been recording the horrors of the Augusto Pinochet dictatorship for more than three decades. This year, the documentary filmmaker won a Silver Bear for best screenplay at the Berlin International Film Festival for *The Pearl Button*. In it, Guzmán delves into Chile's dark past, weaving the history of the nation's decimated indigenous people of Patagonia with that of the murder of political prisoners during the Pinochet regime. Guzmán also received the 2015 Outstanding Achievement Award at the Toronto Hot Docs Festival, where Roxana Olivera caught up with him.

How was *The Battle for Chile* born?

What was taking place [during the 1973 military coup that led to Pinochet's 17-year dictatorship] was so interesting that one felt the need to create a record of that unique phenomenon, of the hugely popular fervour and of the implacable rightwing, backed by the US, which wanted to destroy [President Salvador] Allende at any cost. How could one not film all that? So we did. Each day, we filmed each important event in a clear, conscious and rational manner. We filmed it all, every minute detail. Even though it was difficult to do so, what we filmed was sufficient to cover all important aspects of the evidence. And we spent an entire year secretly filming everything without telling anyone about it. Nothing. No press conferences or anything of that sort. We became anonymous entities so that no-one would bother us. That's how we made the film.

When did you first find out that the CIA was involved in the military coup against Salvador Allende and that it had planted infiltrators at universities?

The first time was when a North American journalist reported that the International Telephone and Telegraph Corporation in Chile was a net of CIA spies. This triggered an international scandal, and the cables that the spies had sent to Washington were subsequently published. That was towards the middle of 1971, when the entire world learned about all this.

But before then there was another warning sign, when Allende won the election and his presidency was to be ratified in Congress. During that period, the CIA was smuggling weapons, through the American Embassy in Chile, which ended up in the hands of

a military unit and people working for the CIA. They assassinated the commander-in-chief of the Chilean army, a democratic and constitutionalist man, who was not against Allende. He was instrumental in keeping the army away from the conspiracy, and for that reason they eliminated him. Attempts to block off Allende's election failed, but, of course, he lost a key figure within the army. That was essentially the first time that the CIA acted in such an overtly partisan manner.

The third warning sign came during the latter part of 1973, when the rightwing *Patria y Libertad* party received funds in US dollars in order to carry out political attacks and acts of bribery. Truck drivers, for instance, received \$2 a day – in brand new bills – to go on strike. Back then \$2 was a lot of money on the black market.

Many people say it is time to turn the page and leave the past behind. Why is it important to remind people of what happened in Chile during that time?

Generally speaking, people who argue that it is time to turn the page belong to the rightwing. I believe that we ought to remember the past because it is fundamental to denouncing state-sponsored terrorism. State-sponsored terrorism cannot go unpunished, because it destroyed the

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Chilean Republic, a republic which had been built over the course of 200 years.

Using the pretext of sweeping away communism, they swept away everything: universities, unions, freedom of the press, freedom of expression, women's rights, indigenous rights, and the like.

So you have to ask yourself: how long will it take for us to rebuild what we had? Because to me, the future is rooted in the past. That is, we had a liberal republic; we had a republic in which ideas would flow freely throughout the nation. All that suddenly came to an end. Forever. Because none of that has been restored. Today, we still have a large segment of the middle class which simply refuses to try to understand what happened in the country.

Little by little, we are getting closer to the true story of the coup and to the truth about those who participated in those atrocities, and who then fled Chile in order to evade justice...

That is typical of a regime in which there is impunity. Not long ago, it was discovered that an individual linked to torture was actually working for the Chilean department of justice within the current government. Someone found out about this man and he was immediately sacked. But up to that point he was working quite happily there.

The fact is that the military dictatorship could never have functioned without the support of the civilian population. The military were incapable of doing all those things alone, because, in general, they didn't have the slightest idea about how to govern a country.

Civilian members of the rightwing did the work of organization on behalf of the military. Yet civilians have seldom been brought to justice.

Sole responsibility for all crimes committed during the Pinochet regime has fallen upon a handful of military personnel.

The statistics speak for themselves. Only 40 per cent of all cases involving human rights violations have been brought to justice. So you have to ask yourself: how is it possible that, after 40 years, 60 per cent of cases are yet to be brought to justice? To expect that 100 per cent be brought to justice is naturally unrealistic, but how about at least 80 per cent?

The daily *El Mercurio* newspaper took a strong stand against Allende. It fabricated as many lies as it wanted during the Pinochet era. It denied the existence of enforced disappearances. It denied the existence of torture. It denied everything. And yet today, *El Mercurio* claims to be a democratic newspaper. The question is: 'Who has judged the reporters who defamed Allende, supported Pinochet and travelled to London to defend him?' There they are.

So, if there is impunity at that level, what else can one expect from justice? Consider the case of the man who killed Víctor Jara [singer-songwriter and social activist arrested, tortured and killed by the military regime just after the 1973 coup]. When a group of youths discovered the whereabouts of the murderer, they went to his office and filmed him right then and there. When that took place, the man almost died of a heart attack on the spot...

So it will be interesting to see how *The Pearl Button* – in which I reconstruct in minute detail how the military went about throwing people, some still alive, from helicopters into the ocean – is received in Chile. ■

Roxana Olivera is an investigative journalist based in Toronto, Canada.

'How long will it take for us to rebuild what we had? To me, the future is rooted in the past'





How to make room for refugees

It's amazing what excuses we'll come up with to avoid helping refugees.

For example, it has been argued that we in Britain haven't the money to help. But last year our unelected House of Lords spent \$385,000 of taxpayers' money on champagne. That's the equivalent of five bottles per Lord! I know it's only a fraction of what's needed, but my goodness, it's a start. Let's scrap the champagne bill and spend it feeding those who need it. And while we're reforming, let's turn Parliament's wine cellar into housing for refugees.

(I warn you, this will involve some hard and serious work – specifically, making room in the wine cellar by drinking all the champagne. But I honestly believe that together, we can find the courage and tenacity to see this merry mission through to its end.)

Another excuse: one helpful Internet Man™ informed me that they can't be genuine refugees if they can afford smartphones. Um, mate... you know they're on the run? They're not at home. A landline's not much use to them. And also, there's no international law that if your country is invaded by ISIS, you have to swap your 21st-century phone for a Nokia 3210.

But my favourite excuse of the lot has to be this: 'Britain is full! There's no room left! It's packed. Packed!! Look down at the floor. Can you see it? No, it's just a sea of feet! That's how full we are. It takes me five hours just to get in the shower every day, having to fight past everyone. I ordered a pizza the other day. Two years, it took. I mean, I got it free because it took more than 30 minutes, but still,

it wasn't nice. We're full!!'

Isn't it odd how people who claim their country is full never have a problem with people having babies? If there's no room for foreigners, surely there's also no room for children? I mean, I know that babies are smaller than foreigners to begin with, but they grow bigger.

Second, Britain is not even slightly full by any measure you choose. For example, it has 700,000 empty homes. And that's not to mention all the empty shops, the empty offices, plus the vast empty chasm of nothingness inside Prime Minister David Cameron's heart.

Britain is the very opposite of full. If anything, we have too much space. In Surrey, there's more land given over to golf courses than to houses. Building houses on those golf courses would achieve three good things. It would give refugees a chance at a decent life. It would annoy people who like golf. And, most importantly of all, it would create the beginnings of the most epic Crazy Golf course in the world. Add an actual windmill and a couple of Stonehenges, and it's done.

We have so much space in our country, and chances are that you do too, wherever you are. Having said that, I do have one idea: let's deport anyone who claims their country is full. You're awful and you're of no value to us. Britain IS full – of racists. Let's have ourselves a little spring clean. ■

Chris Coltrane is a stand-up comedian and anti-austerity activist. Follow him on Twitter: [chris_coltrane](#). His show 'Activism Is Fun' is a free download at [chriscoltrane.com](#)



The case against the FUTURE

The dream of a digitized, technological future full of opportunity is seductive. But why, asks HAL NIEDZVIECKI, does it keep failing to deliver?

Buying a new phone to load with the latest, greatest apps is like buying into a vision of the future in which every interaction is personalized via technology. Eventually, following this appealing vision, each of us will live in a hyper-individualized, virtually enhanced bubble. Our devices – in a cybernetic loop with a totality of internet-connected-things – will know what we want before we do.

To get to this future, we have first to go through what's become known as disruption. 'The 19th century had evolution,' wrote Jill Lepore in *The New Yorker*. 'The 20th century had growth and then innovation. Our era has disruption.'¹ But this disruption is couched in the realm of emerging possibility. We are drawn to it; possibility projects us into a future in which all our problems – from the mundane to the mortal – are swept away. So we accept that disruption is an inevitable, if occasionally concerning, consequence of the arrival of the perfect future. As Jeff Bezos once put it: 'Amazon is not happening to book selling. The future is happening to book selling.'²

The future – digitization, virtualization, ultra-personalization – happened to book selling and then it happened, is still happening, to us. But the details are blurry, shrouded in the mystique of technology. Sometimes it gets hard to see who or what is being disrupted.

The sacrificed

In the course of researching the rise of this new future, I met with a group of warehouse workers living in the southern California region known as the Inland Empire. Only 12 hours' drive from Silicon Valley, these mostly Mexican migrants do the heavy lifting of getting your devices from the Asian factories where they are assembled to the glittering stores where, it seems, our destiny awaits. I spoke to 37-year-old Juana Ibanez, originally from Oaxaca, who

was working in a giant warehouse unpacking and repacking boxes and getting paid \$8 an hour, 40 hours a week. She told me that 'it's a good job' though it's tiring and many co-workers have been injured. She didn't mention that, despite working full time at a backbreaking pace, there isn't enough money to lift herself and her daughters out of poverty.

Juana seems like a holdover from another era, lured to the big city only to find herself chained to a sewing machine. But, in fact, Juana is as much on the cusp of our new future as a venture capitalist barking orders from his Bluetooth headset and surfing the web via Google Glass. Juana's work is increasingly controlled by software systems that apply the same logic of optimizing one's life via self-actualizing, perpetual data collection, except in this case from the perspective of the employer. An entire array of scheduling, tracking and monitoring applications is being brought to bear on how to get the maximum out of each Juana, whether she's working in a warehouse, a Walmart or a Starbucks. Fed into the algorithms designed to maximize productivity, the system tells a worker like Juana via headset which boxes to unload, while warning her if she falls behind her timeframe for performance of the task. If she falls behind too much, she'll be replaced by another Juana. Juana, who has no smartphone or home internet access, is becoming virtualized, turned into a data set. When the final future arrives, her job will be handed over to a robot.

Okay, so migrant workers with no education are being abused by the system. That's nothing

We live in a glittering era of ubiquitous connectivity that, the ideology goes, empowers each and every one of us to create the future we want

new, is it? Restated in the blunt terms of global (i)commerce, an Apple executive puts it this way: 'You can either manufacture in comfortable, worker-friendly factories, or you can reinvent the product every year, and make it better and faster and cheaper, which requires factories that seem harsh by American standards.'³ Juana and her counterparts in Chinese factories are sacrificial lambs, unfortunate but necessary victims of the urgent need to get to the future we want as fast as possible.

Juana tells me that her main hope for the future is that her daughters will go to college and one day join the middle classes who, having enthusiastically embraced the personalized digital future, await their rewards. But even for the well-educated middle classes of the Global North, the future is closing in. In a 2014 paper called 'Inequality in the future: the declining fortunes of the young since 2000', Canadian economists Paul Beaudry, David A Green and Ben Sand show that in the US from 1980 to 2000, skilled university graduates were in steady and increasing demand. But starting in 2000, a decline set in, and every year since there have been fewer jobs for that same set of graduates.

In another paper – 'The great reversal in the demand for skill and cognitive tasks' – they conclude that information technology (IT) went through two decades of massive growth in the 1980s and 1990s, with increased hiring of people with the skills to manage complex new systems. But then, at the start of the millennial period, the IT revolution reached a 'maturity stage'. Now 'the new capital' was in place and 'cognitive task workers' were 'only needed to maintain the new capital'.⁴ At this point the demand for skilled labour begins to decline, good jobs start drying up. Information technology, which increases productivity through parsing billions of pieces of data including data around the efficiency of workers, is in place.

Age of anxiety

Even as we urgently tweet from the line-up to own an Apple Watch, the personalized digitalized future we have enthusiastically embraced is being employed at a corporate level as a means to reduce wages and hire fewer people. In this context, is it all that surprising that the 21st century, the age of disruption, is also the age of crippling anxiety and depression? Global gains in public health over the past 100 years mean that people are now living longer and healthier lives than at any time before. Yet there are few countries that aren't grappling with some form of

mental-health crisis. Here, too, the pace accelerates around the time society rolls out its first iteration of our looming future.

Consider, for instance, that the number of adults on disability in the US due to mental disorders 'increased nearly two and a half times between 1987 and 2007 – from 1 in 184 Americans to 1 in 76'.⁵

In India, a country dogged by grinding poverty, the leading cause of death is suicide. But the highest rates of suicide aren't found in its poorest states. The highest suicide rates in India 'are found in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, the two states with the highest development indicators. The lowest is in Bihar, the state that finishes last in every measure of progress and development.' How to explain this anomaly? Dr Vikram Patel of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine led the India suicide study. Commenting on its findings, he says: 'It has to point to the social environment young people are growing up in – there must be something toxic in the social environment in the rapidly developing states of India, which is not there in less developing states.' He goes on to note that 'the most obvious explanation' is that people have a sense of expectation that life just can't match. 'Your aspirations,' he says, 'have been built up by opportunities that in reality don't exist.'⁶

We live in a glittering era of ubiquitous connectivity that, the ideology goes, empowers each and every one of us to create the future we want. Our role models today are those who have used these new tools to disrupt the established order and stake claim to future-now. And yet many of us, from Juana on up the socio-economic ladder, are finding that these opportunities are more chimera than reality. What's wrong with us? we ask. Everyone's getting rich, but we – working harder for fewer gains – are being left behind. Each time we try to grasp the proffered tomorrow, it melts away in our hands. The future is right in front of us, but we can't seem to get to it. ■

Toronto-based **Hal Niedzviecki** writes about the intersection of individuality, society and technology. His latest book is *Trees on Mars: Our Obsession with the Future* (Seven Stories Press).

¹ Jill Lepore, 'The Disruption Machine', *The New Yorker*, 23 June 2014. ² Steve Coll, 'Citizen Bezos', *The New York Review of Books*, 10 July 2014. ³ Charles Duhigg and David Barboza, 'Apple's iPad and the Human Costs for Workers in China', *The New York Times*, 25 January 2012. ⁴ Paul Beaudry, David A Green, and Benjamin M. Sand, 'The Great Reversal in the Demand for Skill and Cognitive Tasks', Working Paper, National Bureau of Economic Research, March 2013. ⁵ Marcia Angell, 'The Epidemic of Mental Illness: Why?', *The New York Review of Books*, 23 June 2011. ⁶ Stephanie Nolan, 'Suicide among India's Young Adults at "crisis" Levels', *The Globe and Mail*, 21 June 2012.

Puzzle Page by Axe

The crossword prize is a voucher for our online shop to the equivalent of \$30. Only the winner will be notified. Send your entries by 23 October to: New Internationalist Puzzle Page, The Old Music Hall, 106-108 Cowley Road, Oxford OX4 1JE, UK; fax to +44 1865 403346; or email a scan to: puzzlepage@newint.org Winner for Crossword 204: Basil Longy, Ryde, Isle of Wight, England.

Crossword 206

CRYPTIC Across

- 1 US river, along with those from Italy to England, receded (7)
- 5 Respond to promote chart-topper in the West (3,4)
- 10 One US state's up front with Colombian drugs centre (4)
- 11 So far Julie has travelled to a spot in the Hebrides (4,2,4)
- 12 Resort on the Costa del Sol to a con in Massachusetts (6)
- 13 Greeting, embracing chap after support for Hindu woman (8)
- 14 Student obtains academic high ground on Arthurian battle (5,4)
- 16 Name a first-class emirate (5)
- 17 Knock out half of old Beijing with little Russian money (5)
- 19 According to the Spanish the Basque Country capo's visa is forged (4,5)
- 23 He wrote in German, in the margin, about one here on the Rhine (8)
- 24 Part of Canada in the past where accountant rejected help (6)
- 26 One passing by Seine unravelled secret name for her? (10)
- 27 Adjust again in retreat

part of the German-Polish border (4)

- 28 Might get the same directions as 26 to the French department (7)
- 29 Lengthy letter broadcast over Victorian port (7)

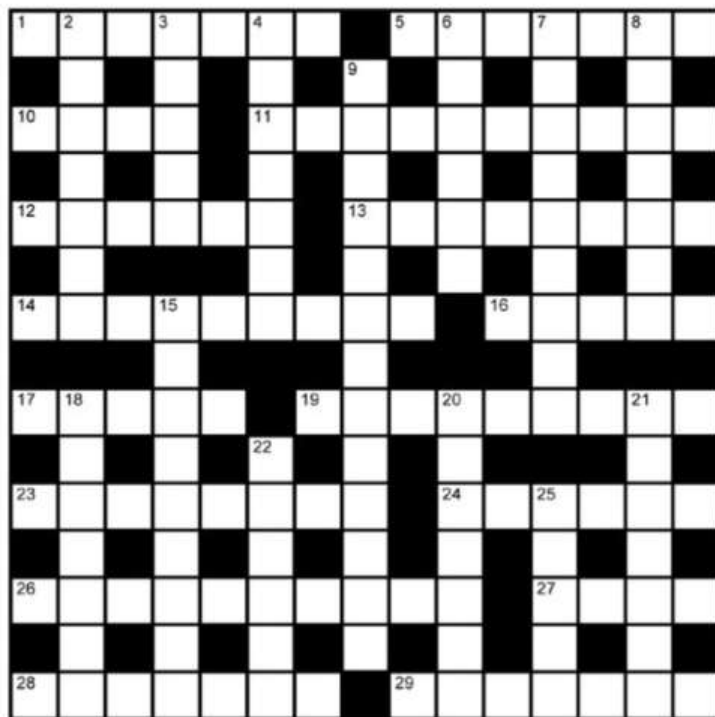
CRYPTIC Down

- 2 A raw do, shamefully, associated with a city near Tokyo (7)
- 3 Affirmation of France and German OK is needed by the board (5)
- 4 Arab courtyard with a kind of square not seen in an Indian city (7)
- 6 Pressure line is oxygen link to where beer's kept (6)
- 7 Place in Burundi university medic gets through 11 after an endless tramp (9)
- 8 Spanish port's tobacco run Nazis captured (7)
- 9 LA row, gambling over greenhouse effect... (6,7)
- 15 ...with Californians living here by the Pacific rim (9)
- 18 Confirmation required to make wings for Mazda here in Japan (7)
- 20 Thai's principal ingredient in sesame curry (7)
- 21 Offence on a navy base means war with Russia (7)
- 22 Press on finally after reaching the mid-point (6)

25 Bikini, for instance, coming at a cost (5)

QUICK Across

- 1 US river emptying into Chesapeake Bay (7)
- 5 Retaliate (3,4)
- 10 City southwest of Bogotá (4)
- 11 Hebridean home to a peaty, salty Scotch single malt whisky (4,2,4)
- 12 Major port and resort city on the Costa del Sol (6)
- 13 Benevolent Hindu mother goddess (8)
- 14 Supposed site of the final victory of Arthur's Britons over the invading Saxons (5,4)
- 16 One of the seven member states of the UAE (5)
- 17 1% of a rouble (5)
- 19 Spanish named for the Basque Country (4,5)
- 23 City of the Rhine, home to a school of German classical music in the 18th century (8)
- 24 Old name for Nova Scotia, before the ejection of the French (6)
- 26 Female citizen of a 'chic' city? (10)
- 27 German-Polish border river (4)
- 28 French river and department, capital Laval (7)



29 Wool and oil-refining centre in Victoria, Australia (7)

QUICK Down

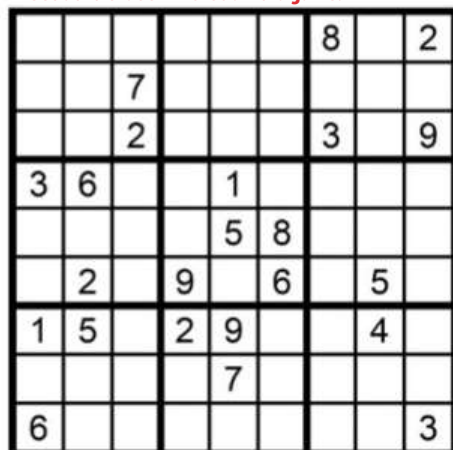
- 2 City SW of Tokyo, the gateway to the Izu Peninsula (7)
- 3 Spiritual board used at seances (5)
- 4 Uttar Pradesh city where the Muslim University was set up as the Anglo-Oriental College in 1875 (7)
- 6 Line on a map indicating equal barometric pressure (6)
- 7 Capital of Burundi (9)
- 8 Port of NW Spain from which the Armada set sail in 1588 (7)
- 9 The corollary of the 'greenhouse effect' (6,7)
- 15 Californian seaside resort near San Diego (9)
- 18 Major Japanese railway junction in Honshu (7)
- 20 Ex-Thai (7)
- 21 Of a self-declared republic which signed a Treaty of Accession with Russia in 2014 (7)
- 22 NW Iranian of the OT: average, par (6)
- 25 Coral strand (5)

LAST MONTH'S SOLUTION

Across: 1 Heimay, 4 Camargue, 10 Bendigo, 11 Brawler, 12 Ex-con, 13 Banda Aceh, 14 Sudanese, 16 Avast, 18 Norte, 20 Pakistan, 24 Magdeburg, 25 Eiger, 27 Die-hard, 28 Okinawa, 29 Coral Sea, 30 Angers.
Down: 1 Hebrews, 2 Ionic, 3 Avignon, 5 Albany, 6 Alabama, 7 Gold Coast, 8 Earshot, 9 Mombasa, 15 *De rigueur*, 17 Rangoon, 18 Nomadic, 19 Eyeball, 21 Iberian, 22 Normans, 23 Dundee, 26 Glade.

Sudoku 52

The Sudoku that thinks it's a word game!



Now, using the key below, substitute letters for the numbers in the north-central block...

1=L; 2=F; 3=N; 4=A; 5=S; 6=M; 7=O; 8=E; 9=I

...and make as many words as you can of five letters or more from the nine letters in the keyword, the extra clue to which is: 'British place: is the French "d'homme"? (4,2,3)'. You cannot use the same letter more than once, nor use proper nouns (excepting the keyword), slang, offensive words, abbreviations, participles or simple plurals (adding an 's' or 'es').

GOOD 30 words of at least five letters, including 8 of six letters or more

VERY GOOD 35 words of at least five letters, including 10 of six letters or more.

EXCELLENT 40 words of at

EXCELLENT 40 words of at least five letters, including 12 words of six letters or more.

Last month's **Sudoku keyword**: 'Maronites'

Solution to Wordsearch 51: The 15 Latin American capitals were: Asuncion, Belmopan, Bogota, Caracas, Cayenne, La Paz, Lima, Managua, Mexico City, Panama City, Paramaribo, Quito, San José, Santiago, Tegucigalpa.

Wordsearch 52

Find the 20 Commonwealth countries hidden here.



Susan Abulhawa

The Palestinian American author and human rights activist talks to GRAEME GREEN about trauma, nonviolent resistance and false narratives in the Israeli occupation of Palestine.



Your latest novel, *The Blue Between Sky And Water*, looks at Israel and Palestine as a generational issue. What has been handed down from generation to generation?

With every society, one's heritage, wounds and collective trauma are handed down. It's part of the identity.

How are things changing for each generation?

When a collective trauma has ended, when it's acknowledged and atoned for, as in the case, for example, of the Jewish Holocaust, then it does change from one generation to another. In the case of African Americans, their holocaust was generations ago, but they still have a different kind of collective trauma. It's the same for Palestinians: our initial expulsion, the ethnic cleansing and massacres were a different kind of experience for grandparents and parents. For us today, it varies not just by generation but where we ended up. For those who still live under Israeli occupation, the persistent daily violence is different from life for those Palestinians who live in refugee camps and are stateless and impoverished, or people like myself who ended up in the diaspora but disconnected from our family and heritage. There are a lot of individual narratives that feed into a larger narrative of being violated and ethnically cleansed.

Women's stories and voices are the focus of the novel. Do you feel women's voices have been sidelined in the Israel-Palestine issue?

Women are sidelined everywhere.

Women fight profound daily battles against the violence of the occupation, against the patriarchy. It tends to occur without fanfare; it's just a part of life. I'm very interested in the ways they navigate their lives under these extraordinary conditions.

Do you think there's a difference between men's and women's attitudes to the conflict?

It's not just a gender issue, but about being led by a particular privileged class of men, which is a theme in every country, including Palestine, and that's problematic. You end up having a very narrow representation of narrative, of strategy, of outlook.

You're the founder of Playgrounds for Palestine (PfP), a non-profit organization that sets up children's parks in Palestine, as well as Libya and Syria. What effect does conflict have on children?

They're traumatized in serious ways. In Gaza, 98.6 per cent of kids exhibit some symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder. That's a staggering statistic. PfP is a band aid on a gushing wound. We don't have illusions about what we do. But for the kids we're able to help, we know it means a lot to them and that's what keeps us going.

You're also involved with the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign against Israel. Why do you think a boycott is the answer?

For me, anything that involves popular mobilization is hopeful. The boycott campaign is a tool and an avenue for everyone to take a stand in some way.

It's a nonviolent method of resisting an injustice that has gone on for too long and where there seems no end in sight.

Could more be done on the Palestinian side to push the peace process forward?

I know people talk about this in terms of two sides, but I don't talk about it in that way. When people speak like that, it suggests that these are just two equal parties who disagree on something. It's a false narrative. You have a highly armed nuclear power that uses its might against a principally unarmed, principally defenceless civilian population that has no military, no navy, no army, no air force and no real weapons to speak of; yet the focus is often on homemade Palestinian rockets that most often land in open fields. Israeli snipers routinely kill people in Gaza.

Israel makes 1.6 million people live under crippling economic, psychological and military siege but none of these things are spoken of as aggression: it's only aggression when it's a Palestinian response. By definition, everything an occupied people does is a response to the occupation, but it's never framed that way in the media. That's why I don't engage in this discourse that tries to create a parity between an occupier and an occupied people. ■

The Blue Between Sky and Water by Susan Abulhawa is published by Bloomsbury. playgroundsforpalestine.org

Graeme Green is a journalist and photographer: @greengraeme

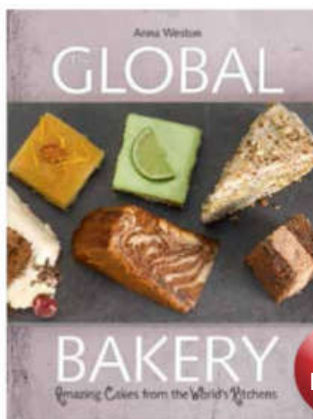


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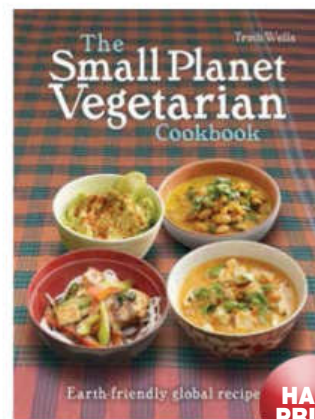


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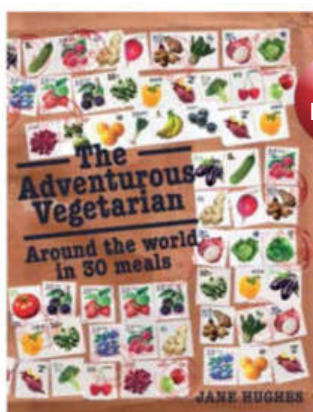


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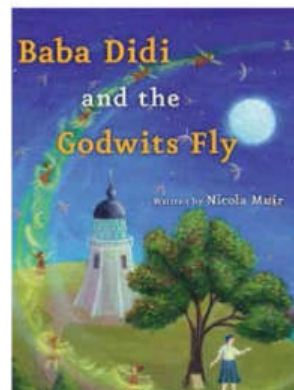


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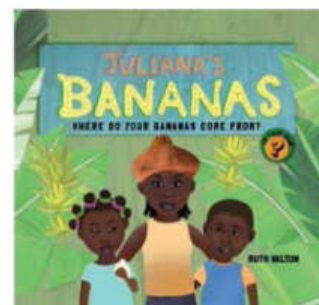
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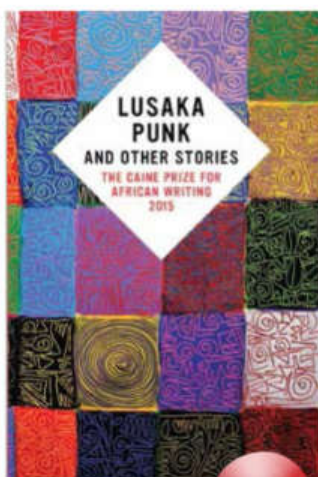
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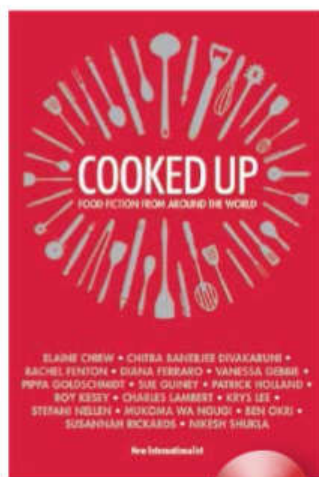
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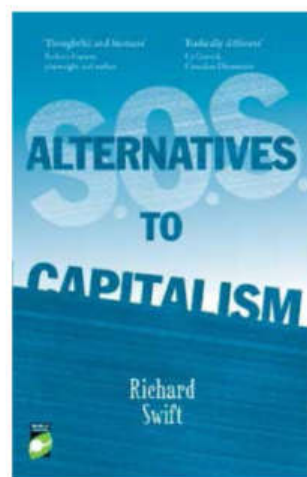
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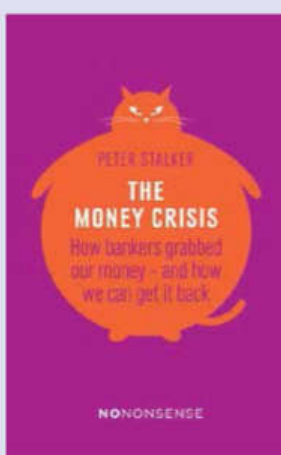
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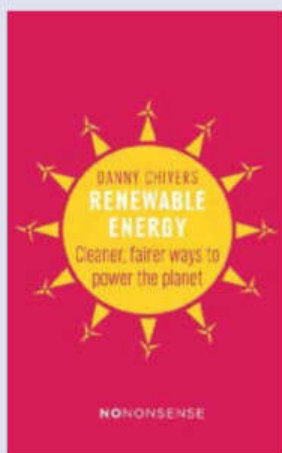
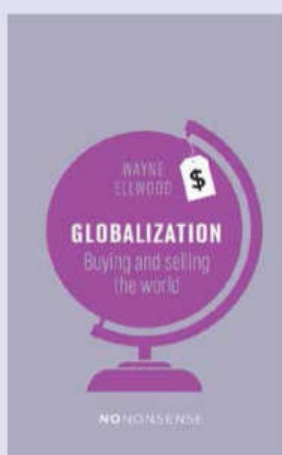
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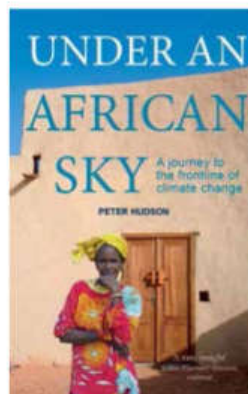
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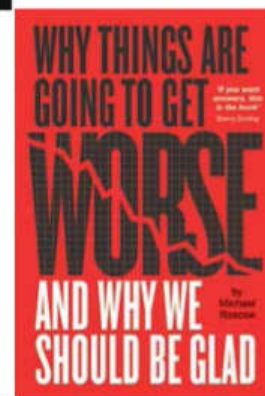
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